

***LANDSCAPES OF THE UNCONSCIOUS MIND: A DIALECTIC OF SELF AND
MEMORY ON A POST-COLONIAL, SOUTH AFRICAN LANDSCAPE IN THE HAND-
ANIMATED, CHARCOAL-MEDIUM FILMS OF WILLIAM KENTRIDGE.***

by

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation focuses on the animated, charcoal, hand-drawn films of William Kentridge's *Drawings for Projection* series (1989—2003). At the beginning of this study, Kentridge's films are positioned as a dialectic of self and memory as embodied in a post-colonial South African setting. The series itself was selected as being representative of his artistic *oeuvre*. They are a closed-ended narrative, using a ground-breaking animation technique, created by the artist himself (Christov-Bakargiev 1998; Godby 1982). They were made by Kentridge during a specific South African cultural and historical period: beginning with *Johannesburg, 2nd Greatest City after Paris*, made in 1989 at the height of apartheid; through to *Tide Table*, made in 2003 at the beginning of post post-apartheid South Africa. The hypothesis presented is that Kentridge's films have memory as their main theme. Memory itself takes different forms, and the discourse of memory deals with, for instance: memorialisation; repressed memories; traumatic memories; the unconscious and memories; and "postmemory". How he depicts memories of his own and those of others is at the centre of this research. Using qualitative research methodology, with contextualisation (socio-historical and cultural) and comparative studies (apartheid and the Holocaust; different artistic representations of memory, for example Pascal Croci and William Kentridge; and Anselm Kiefer and William Kentridge) being part of the research design, this thesis has sought to substantiate this hypothesis. Further substantiation and clarification has been expounded by referencing seminal works in the field, such as those of Sigmund Freud (1899: "screen memories"; 1917: *trauerarbeit*); Roland Barthes (1981: the *punctum* / spacio-temporal continuum); Pierre Nora (1989: "*lieux de mémoire*" / "sites of memory"); Henri Raczymow (1994: "*mémoire trouée*" / "memory shot through with holes"); Richard

Terdiman (1993: *poesis*); Marianne Hirsch (1997: “postmemory”); and Hayden White (1996: historical metafiction); among others. There have already been numerous references to how William Kentridge has depicted the ephemeral nature of memory / memories (Boris 2001; Cameron, Christov-Bakargiev and Coetzee, 1999; Christov-Bakargiev 1998; Sitas 2001). However an in-depth, hermeneutic, comparative analysis has not yet been undertaken. This study is therefore significant in that it explicates William Kentridge’s works, making the following contributions: to the scholarship on Kentridge’s work; to a South African perspective to the growing field of trauma studies; and to the apartheid and post-apartheid reflections on re-remembering and forgetting, memorialisation, forgiveness and guilt. Through socio-cultural and historical comparisons as well as artistic contrasts, the films themselves are acknowledged as an important source of reference of South African society. They are a documentation of life lived during apartheid and post-apartheid South Africa.

TABLE OF CONTENTS	PAGES
A TERMINOLOGICAL SYNOPSES OF CONCEPTS	i
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 William Kentridge: A study in memory	1
1.2 The aim of the study	3
1.3 Need and motivation for the research	7
1.4 Introduction and demarcation of subject area	8
1.5 Theoretical and conceptual foundations of the study	10
1.6 Methodological research strategy	12
1.7 Definitions of key terms	16
1.8 Layout of the thesis	16
1.9 Contributions and limitations of this study	18
1.10 Conclusion	18
CHAPTER 2: WILLIAM KENTRIDGE: LITERATURE REVIEW (PART I)	20
2.1 Part I: Art books	20
2.1.1 Kentridge's personal background	22
2.1.2 Kentridge's artistic endeavours prior to his <i>animated film series</i>	28
2.1.3 Kentridge's artistic influences	30
2.1.4 A discussion of Kentridge's artistic <i>animated technique</i>	36
2.1.5 <i>The nine films in the Drawings for Projection series</i>	40
2.1.6 A discussion of the themes and motifs found in <i>Kentridge's films</i>	50
2.2 Part II: Scholarly works on Kentridge	51
2.3 Conclusion	58
CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW: THEORETICAL (PART II)	60
3.1 Psychoanalysis and Sigmund Freud	60
3.2 Psychoanalysis and Laura Mulvey	69
3.3 Post-structuralist and postmodernist concepts	72
3.4 Postmodernism, history and Hayden White	77
3.5 Discourse on memory	86

3.5.1 <i>Individual memory</i>	87
3.5.2 <i>Collective memory</i>	88
3.5.3 <i>Exposition on memory studies</i>	90
3.5.4 <i>Trauma</i>	93
3.6 Conclusion	95
 CHAPTER 4: A METHODOLOGY OF MEMORY	 97
4.1 The qualitative paradigm	97
4.2 Qualitative methods	99
4.3 The researcher's role	100
4.4 Data collection	101
4.5 Sampling methods	102
4.6 Data analysis	103
4.7 The narrative or pilot study	107
4.8 Limitations	108
4.9 Conclusion	108
 CHAPTER 5: MEMORY	 110
5.1 Memories and rememberings	114
5.2 Postmemory	121
5.3 Memory	125
5.4 Memory and identity	139
5.5 Screen memories <i>Part I</i>	147
5.6 Conclusion	154
 CHAPTER 6: MEMORY, "THE UNCONSCIOUS" AND TRAUMA	 155
6.1 Trauma	159
6.2 Trauma and second witnessing	164
6.3 Memory and dreams	175
6.4 Screen memories <i>Part II</i>	196
6.5 Conclusion	204
 CHAPTER 7: QUESTIONS OF MEMORY, REPRESENTATION AND AESTHETICS	 206
7.1 Representation	207
7.2 Re-representation	213
7.2.1 <i>Artists / authors</i>	213
7.2.1.1 <i>art spiegelman (sic)</i>	214
7.2.1.2 <i>Pascal Croci</i>	225
7.2.1.3 <i>Joe Kubert</i>	229

7.2.2 <i>Film and postmemory</i>	234
7.2.2.1 <i>Voyeurism and spectator identification</i>	241
7.2.2.2 <i>Voyeurism and aesthetics</i>	257
7.2.2.3 <i>Photography and representation</i>	262
7.3 Conclusion	272
 CHAPTER 8: MEMORY, HISTORY, IDENTITY, TIME AND SPACE	274
8.1 History as metafiction	275
8.2 Identity	282
8.3 Sigmund Freud's <i>A Note upon the Mystic Writing Pad</i>	303
8.4 Time and space	310
8.5 Conclusion	330
 CHAPTER 9: MEMORY, LANDSCAPES, CITIES AND MONUMENTS	332
9.1 Landscapes	340
9.2 Cities	373
9.3 Monuments	405
9.4 Conclusion	415
 CHAPTER 10: CONCLUSION	421
10.1 Contributions and limitations of this study	421
10.2 Summation	423
10.3 New / other Kentridge projects	424
10.4 Possible future projects for research	427
10.5 Conclusion	428
 SOURCES CONSULTED	430

TERMINOLOGICAL SYNOPSES OF CONCEPTS

As this study of William Kentridge's animated films is so eclectic, a brief summation of the most important terms / concepts has been provided up front here.

absent memory (Sicher 2004)

Efraim Sicher coined this term to describe memories that are “transferred” to those that were not present first-hand (2004). This term is used to describe how Kentridge has adopted memories not of his own, and, through his identification with them, how he has portrayed them in his art works. He has appropriated the documented / recounted traumatic memories of others and attempted to portray them in his artistic endeavours.

anamnesis

William Kentridge defines this concept as a healing through remembering (cf. Boris 2001:33). His character Soho/Felix remembers both his own memories and those of others. However, although it is assumed, it remains an unanswered question as to whether these “memories” have actually resulted in Kentridge's protagonist, Soho/Felix, being healed.

“anti-narrative non-stories” (White 1996)

Hayden White suggests that “anti-narrative non-stories” as found in filmic and literary forms are non-linear stories that do not represent historical events as fixed narratives (1996). Rather they are open-ended, mixed narratives, somewhat chaotic and even surreal at times. White argues that these anti-narratives are

more realistic in the portrayal of remembered events because memories are also recalled in such a manner. This is appropriate for describing William Kentridge's animated films as he tries to draw or present memory and history as it is thought and remembered.

chronotope (Bakhtin 1981)

It has been posited by many authors that memories are structured through the means of certain cultural conventions (Antze and Lambek 1996; Kirmayer 1996; Lambek 1996). Mikhail Bakhtin identified what he termed the "chronotope" as one of these cultural conventions (1981). He specifically used it in language analysis and defined it as a space-time continuum / narrative, explaining that they are interdependent. Michael Lambek has used it to explain how memories are linked to their recounting. (See *Chapter Five: Memory* of this dissertation.)

disremembering (Kentridge 2001; Rollet 2007)

William Kentridge refers to "forgetting" as "disremembering". He uses the word to emphasise that "forgetting" is a conscious act; one chooses what to remember and what to forget. Author Sylvie Rollet has used the word (2007) in a similar way (see *Chapter Eight: Memory, History, Identity, Time and Space*).

fortuna (Kentridge 2001)

William Kentridge has described his artistic creative process as "*fortuna*". He has defined this process as a combination of both rationality and chance (cited in Boris 2001:35). Essentially it is Kentridge's way of stating that while his work is not

completely planned and structured, it is also not completely a form of word / drawing association or rather, not completely an unconscious act. He has given numerous examples of instances where he has drawn an image for his films, or included words or word plays, where he has only retrospectively realised that these words, and even drawings are specifically based on his past experiences or on his memories of these past experiences. It is often only retrospectively that this merging of ideas, emotions, words and images has made sense to him and he has been able to make an association between them and previous experiences.

generational transference of traumatic memory / second-generation witnessing

This is a concept of memory that serves to explain how some second generation individuals have inherited the traumas endured by their parents or siblings (Bar-On 1995; Bauman 1998; Berger 1998; Brodzki 2004; Fox 1999; Hass 1996; Sicher 2004; Zeitlin 1998 / 2004). It is a concept that helps one to understand the desire for the re-enactment or re-presentation of trauma that has been passed down generationally. This concept serves to help understand Kentridge's and other artists' obsessions with the depiction of past traumas that they have "inherited" from their family members. William Kentridge's historical background as a South African Jew could be used to explain his desire to portray Holocaust images as part of his inheritance. He is only too well aware that had his grandfather Morris Kantorowicz not immigrated from Zhager (Lithuania) to South Africa in 1903, he and his family members would have been decimated along with all the other Lithuanian Jews.

historicising process (Bathrick 2004)

David Bathrick uses this term to explain how artists and others rework or re-present historical events that they have not experienced personally (2004). Through this process of re-presentation the emphasis is not on the events themselves but on how individuals recover these past events. In this process of recovering them, and re-presenting them, the individual makes sense of what they do not understand. In this way the individual also comes to experience a form of closure. This term is especially important for explaining how second generation survivors come to terms with their families' tortured pasts. It is not only applicable to understanding William Kentridge's animated films and other art works, but also to understanding other artists and their works. These artists include art spiegelman (*sic*) and Pascal Croci (see *Chapter Seven* for more details).

intertextuality (Kristeva 1996)

Julia Kristeva coined the term "intertextuality" to describe how texts are not stand-alone texts (1996). Rather texts are made up of other texts, they are interrelated and various and diverse texts assimilate one another. It emphasises that texts are not made in a vacuum, but are ideological, cultural, political, and religious. It is also used to explain texts as having a multiplicity of meanings and interpretations. This study refers to Kentridge's works as intertextual as they are created within his and South Africa's history; they relate to South Africa's social and cultural past and present, as well as those of other countries. His films are not bound to only one interpretation, but to a proliferation of different meanings.

landscapes (Cosgrove 1998; cf. Osborne 2001)

Dennis Cosgrove refers to the concept as a word that implies a historical discourse, through which various peoples have situated themselves (1998). This is appropriate to the interpretation of Kentridge's films, especially that of *Felix in Exile* where he marks the land, using red pastels. It is this author's opinion that he does so in an attempt to show how the indigenous peoples of South Africa have their histories and identities bound to the land. This is particularly tragic in light of forced removals that took place during the apartheid era, such as that of *District Six*.

“lieux de mémoire” / sites of memory (Nora 1989)

Pierre Nora, a French social historian, claims that “*lieux de mémoire*” / sites of memory are monuments, museums, festivals, and even archives that document history (1989). He claims that these historical artefacts are essential to remembering histories that have been abandoned. This concept is prevalent in the animated film of William Kentridge, *Monument*, which initially positions the monument as a testament to the mine workers who had perished, as a site of memory.

“*memoire trouée*” / “memory shot through with holes” (Raczynow 1994)

Henri Raczynow defines this memory as a void, or an absence, a memory of not “remembering and not being there” (1994:101-102). It is memory at a distance: geographical, historical and spatial. These “memories” are not of first hand events and experiences, but through historical and personal accounts, appropriated and represented and “remembered” by others; they are “perspectival”, constantly moving through time. This concept describes how Kentridge is able to represent and “remember” others’ memories and portray them through his imagination, in some cases as though they are his very own memories.

memory envy (Hartman 2004)

Geoffrey Hartman has postulated that there is a form of memory which he has termed “memory envy” that defines an individual who has not experienced traumatic experiences first hand, but has adopted them through completely identifying with them (2004:230; cf. Hartman 1996; Hirsch 1997). This is almost identical to Marion Hirsch’s concept of “postmemory” (1997). Both concepts are useful in explaining and understanding Kentridge’s depictions of traumatic experiences. He has not experienced these traumas personally, but through identifying and empathising with them he has chosen to portray them in his films and other artistic works.

narrated memory: *poesis* (Terdiman 1993)

Richard Terdiman considers narrated memory to be a “*poesis*”, or rather a creation and an alteration or an adaptation of remembered experiences; an individual’s own

memory as well as their adoption of others' memories (1993). This is a concept that is vital in understanding William Kentridge's animated films. Not only are the films themselves told / re-told in a narrative form, they are the re/creation of memories, that of his memories as well as that of others' memories.

politics of memory (Antze and Lambeck 1996)

Paul Antze and Michael Lambeck believe that memory, while inherently connected to identity, has become "politicised". Memories are interpretive reconstructions made up of cultural and social conventions. This interpretation of memory is important to understand Kentridge's portrayals of a traumatic historical past which he attempts to situate politically, socially and culturally. Memory is centred on an essential subject, but that subject could either be an individuated "I" or a collective "we".

memoro politics (Hacking 1996)

Ian Hacking, while studying the science of memory, introduced this new term to the discourse of memory. Memory is intrinsically bound to the concept of identity. He defines memory as being constituted through politics. This thesis links this concept of memory to Sigmund Freud's idea that individuals' identities are created / formed predominantly by what they have forgotten. This thesis then positions Soho/Felix's identity as having been formed through politics.

postmemory (Hirsch 1997)

This concept was coined by Marianne Hirsch, who uses it to describe a form of memory that is connected to an object or source as mediated not through recollection but through imagination (1997:22). This is used to describe Kentridge's "memories" of others' past trauma (individual / collective / historical) through empathy and identification and through his imagination.

post post-apartheid

"Post post-apartheid", has not, as far as can be determined, been defined or specifically delineated. For purposes of this dissertation, the concept is amalgamated out of a few very observations concerning South Africa, fourteen years after the establishment of the TRC. The year 1994 in South Africa serves as marker for the beginning of the era and state termed "post-apartheid". In April of that year, Nelson Mandela was elected as President of South Africa in the first democratic elections. Obviously cultural, social and political change, rarely, if ever, coheres instantaneously and around a particular event, however, this era is one of them. Apartheid was defined by its racial inequality, human rights abuses, segregation, by-laws, and censorship. It was also defined by a State of Emergency and by the civil war between the Inkatha Freedom Party and the United Democratic Front in Natal (now Kwa-Zulu Natal). Post-apartheid, after 1994, was an era seen to encapsulate the ethos of reconciliation, mourning and forgiveness. This was part of the aim in establishing The Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Post post-apartheid can be viewed as the era, circa 2003 onwards, where many individuals experience existential anxiety. There are persistently racialised fears, and a constant uncertainty about the future political and social directions of South Africa. It also encapsulates an era that does not concern itself with the repercussions of apartheid, but rather with the here and now and problems pervading South Africans in the present (Buys 2010; Goldstuck 2006). These concerns include xenophobia; government corruption and nepotism; the ever-growing divide between the classes, to mention a few.

screen memories (Freud 1899a and 1899b)

This phrase was introduced by Sigmund Freud to explain his view that individuals do not remember actual instances or events (1899a and 1899b). Rather, they remember memories: or memories of memories; or remembered fantasies. Freud also postulated that the act of remembering is one of narrative. This idea is used to explain Kentridge's propensity to remember memories of memories, both his own and those of others. (Freud's concept of screen memories is much more complicated than this brief encapsulation suggests. It is, however, explained, discussed and applied in more detail throughout this study.)

self-identity

This concept, as defined and explained by Victor Burgin (1996), links the self, the "I" to: place; time; space; history; and geography. Therefore any identity, whether it is the subject / individuated "I", or the collective "we", is related to both a time and a place. This idea, as expounded by Burgin, is used within this study to reference

William Kentridge's films as being partly autobiographical. **trauerarbeit** (Freud 1917 / 1957; Freud 2005)

Sigmund Freud coined the term "*trauerarbeit*", which basically means "psychic trauma". William Kentridge has placed it on the cover of his book that deals with his miniature theatre production *Black Box / Chambre Noir* (2006), as well as using it within the theatre production itself. This thesis refers to this concept to explain the difference between physical and psychical traumas and their resultant memories. It is also a reference as to how William Kentridge tries to depict "psychic traumas" by drawing the insides of brains which contain red lines — evidence of traumas experienced by individuals, either as individuals or part of a nation's trauma. It is linked to the concept of "traumatic memory".

traumatic memory (Young 1996)

Allan Young stresses two meanings of traumatic memory (1996). The first meaning of traumatic memory is psychical. This memory is made up of imagery of past torments / tortures, and disturbing psychical sensations. The second meaning of traumatic memory that Young emphasises is that of a neurological or physical trauma (cf. Stone 2003). The latter meaning of traumatic memory is a physical or body trauma which continues to remember pain, both physical and mental. Underlying this concept of "traumatic memory" is Sigmund Freud's belief that the unconscious mind is filled with memories that are too awful to acknowledge consciously (1899a). Kentridge attempts to portray both types of traumatic memory in his films and other artistic works. Not only does he draw images of

physiological brains and what their innards “consist” of, in an attempt to draw / represent / portray psychical trauma; he also draws images of physical trauma, for instance, images of individuals who suffered torture at the hands of the supporters and enforcers of apartheid. For example, in his film *History of the Main Complaint* he draws images of individuals having electrodes attached to their bodies and being shocked continuously. He uses his artist’s imagination to depict what he perceives these traumatic memories to look like.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 William Kentridge: A study in memory

This dissertation critically analyses William Kentridge's animated, charcoal, hand-drawn *Drawings for Projection* film series (1989 - 2003) in order to argue that Kentridge's works represent memory — both personal and collective, within a specifically South African context. There have already been numerous references to how William Kentridge has depicted the ephemeral nature of memory / memories (Boris 2001; Cameron, Christov-Bakargiev and Coetzee, 1999; Godby 1992; Sitas 2001). However, this thesis explicates Kentridge's works further by linking memory and trauma and his representation of the horror of apartheid. Several seminal works have been referenced, such as those of Sigmund Freud (1899: "screen memories"; 1917: "*trauerarbeit*"); Henri Raczymow (1994: "*memoire trouée*" / "memory shot through with holes"); Richard Terdiman (1993: "*poesis*" / narrated memory); Marianne Hirsch (1997: "postmemory"). By connecting memory and trauma this paper articulates how and why Kentridge portrays apartheid's atrocities and their traumatic aftermath surrealistically and in a unique manner. This thesis will further argue that Kentridge uses the concept of memory to bring together identity, being, time, space, history and place. Through his artistic technique of incomplete erasure he reveals the continuing effect that the past has on the present: Kentridge draws an image or scene, which he photographs and then "erases". These "erasures" leave behind imprints, or smudges, which he then draws over, which morph into different images, and different meanings. His work physically depicts layers of reality, a reference to his drawings and erasures — the supposedly dominant and "official" present and the unsuccessfully erased past. In other

words, he depicts memory itself. That Kentridge's animated films represent memory is a well-documented interpretation of Kentridge's work¹. However, while this is a well-established interpretation of Kentridge's films, it must be noted that the majority of authors who contend this, including the artist himself, are writing for art books, art reviews, art journals, newspapers, and lectures, with only the very occasional academic article amongst them (for instance see Dubow and Rosengarten 2004; and Taylor 2008; see *Chapters Two* and *Three* for the relevant literature reviews). There are also several post-graduate studies on Kentridge, but none of these studies deal with the filmic series in its entirety and many focus on his other art works, such as his tapestries, prints or still lifes². The majority of these writings are descriptive and not analytical, as *Chapter Two*, a literature review, will make apparent. This chapter reviews the substantive writings on Kentridge's art works. While many art books that are dedicated to the work of Kentridge include essays by esteemed academics such as Michael Godby (1992), Dan Cameron (1999) and Ari Sitas (2001), no academic book has been written on Kentridge and his animated filmic series. Also, to date (2011), and as far as can be determined, no doctoral study has focused entirely on Kentridge's filmic series and his representation of memory (see *Chapter Two* for review of post-graduate studies on Kentridge's works). In

¹ Cf. Alemani 2006; Benezra 2001; Boris 2001; Cameron 2001; Christov-Bakargiev 1998 and 1999; Coetzee 1999; Coetzee 2001; Cooke 2001; Dubrow and Rosengarten 2004; Enwezor 1998; Enwezor 2007; Godby 1992; Kentridge 1999b, 2001, 2006a, 2006b, 2006c, 2006d, 2007a, 2007b, 2007c; Krut 2006; Law-Viljoen 2007a, 2007b, 2007c; Oppelt 1999; Sitas 2001; Stewart 2006; Stone 2003; Taylor 2008; Wilson 2006.

² Cf. Belluigi 2001; Bergman, 2010; Chen, 2004; Collier, 2004; Garza 2011; Hennlich, 2010; Kapitza-Meyer 1994; Kucharski, 2005; Maltz, 2008; McIlleron 2003; Oliver-Smith 1999; Opperman 1999; Pai, 2003; Sasson (no date); Schoeman, 2007; and Thompson 2005.

addition to this, it should be noted that in the five³ international, seminal works by renowned scholars focusing on South African cinema, published in the last five years, only one and a half pages of text is dedicated to Kentridge — arguably South Africa's most pre-eminent artist. This not only highlights from the outset just how significant this study is, but also points out the clear gap in past research that it fills.

1.2 The aim of the study

The aim of this research is to investigate how and why William Kentridge's films depict and engage with memory and memories (his own and others'), within a specific South African, apartheid, post-apartheid, and post post-apartheid context.⁴ When Kentridge completed his first two films in the series, that is *Johannesburg, 2nd Greatest city after Paris*, made in 1989, and *Monument*, made in 1990, films, documentaries, articles, newspaper reports and television programmes that were in any way anti-apartheid in nature were banned. If found guilty of either producing or disseminating such material you could face prison, or at the very least, be threatened with prison. Kentridge's films however, were one of the first documented depictions of apartheid and its atrocities to reach the public. At the height of the State of Emergency (circa

³ These five seminal works are:

Martin Botha's *Marginalised Lives and Painful Pasts: South African Cinema after Apartheid* (2007); and *South African Cinema 1896 — 2010* (2011);

Jacqueline Maingard's *South Africa's National Cinema* (2008);

Keyan Tomaselli's *Cultural Icons* (2009); and lastly,

Lucia Sak's *Cinema in a Democratic South Africa: The Race for Representation* (2010).

⁴ Please see: *Terminological Synopses of Concepts* for a definition of this latter term.

1989), government secrecy was at its strictest, police and army control was at its most enforced. South African society was still at its most naïve and very little was known about the inner machinations of the South African Nationalist Party. William Kentridge was an exception to this, having had first-hand experience of the Nationalist Party and its rule as he grew up in an anti-apartheid environment. His father, Sir Sydney Kentridge, was involved in defending anti-apartheid activists in a number of landmark trials, including the Steve Biko inquest, the Treason trials and the Nelson Mandela trials (Christov-Bakargiev 1998:13). Kentridge himself, while a student at the University of the Witwatersrand, took part in protests against the militant White Nationalist Party (Christov-Bakargiev 1998 and 1999). Even during his school years Kentridge was aware of the “outrageous things” that were happening in an “abnormal society”: torture; detention without trial; police brutality (Kentridge cited in Christov-Bakargiev 1998:13). His films provided evidence of this “abnormal society”: the inhumane treatment and capitalist exploitation of workers in mines; the extreme disparity between the “haves” and the “have-nots”; evidence of a split society kept separate by razor wire and inhumane laws. For instance, the elite suburb of Houghton (Kentridge’s family home) is separated by razor wire from the township Alexandria (cf. depicted in his film *Johannesburg, 2nd Greatest City after Paris; Mine*). As an anti-apartheid activist and executive member of the Black Sash (from 1987 — 1990), this researcher was able to relate to the depictions of an apartheid society as represented by Kentridge, having experienced them first-hand, with for instance, the researcher having been arrested at peaceful protests; being constantly intimidated by the police; and learning of the torture, rape and death of close associates and community

members who were involved in the anti-apartheid movement. Also, while living in Imbali⁵ as a peace monitor, this researcher was exposed to the inhumane living conditions of the community: abject poverty; no amenities; a lack of infrastructure; police curfew; constant police and army harassment and presence; and constant civil unrest.⁶ Personal experience of these two different worlds — the “haves” and the “have-nots” — was indeed “split” or “schizophrenic”. This personal identification with Kentridge’s works was the inspiration for this study. However, this over-identification led to one of the limitations of the study: a naturally biased and subjective interpretation of Kentridge’s works. Had the researcher not experienced these conditions and events first-hand, the interpretation might have well been different. A severe hindrance of this study was the almost complete unobtainability of his films⁷ or direct access to his installations and other art works.⁸ Another hindrance was the fact that Kentridge himself writes and speaks prolifically on his own works, thereby leaving little room for elaboration or outside insight. Because Kentridge has largely driven the debate around his works through his own erudite commentary, and, given the assumption that he cannot be conversant with all of

⁵ A township found outside of Pietermaritzburg, KwaZulu-Natal.

⁶ The Inkatha Freedom Party was led by Zulu Chief, Mangosuthu Gatsha Buthelezi. He was elected head of the non-independent black state of KwaZulu-Natal (previously Natal) in 1972 and revived the Inkatha Freedom Party in 1975 after breaking with the African National Congress (ANC). Rejecting full independence for KwaZulu-Natal, he worked within the white Afrikaans establishment to end apartheid. In the late 1980s and early 1990s he engaged in a fierce struggle for leadership with the ANC. Thousands were killed and left homeless in the violent Inkatha-ANC clashes. Following the 1994 democratic national elections, he was appointed Minister of Home Affairs by Nelson Mandela (SA history online ... 2012).

⁷ The films’ price ranges went from R110.00 in 1994 to 100s of thousands in the early 21st century.

⁸ This was somewhat overcome with the assistance of the artist himself who was kind enough to provide copies of his films and other artworks to the researcher.

the manifold academic discourses dealing with, for instance, trauma and memory, his own interpretations of his work are often limited. One of the reasons for the lack of scholarship and theoretical framework on Kentridge's works is undoubtedly in part because Kentridge himself has articulated his own works in terms of his artistic technique and motive. His own, often erudite, contributions and participations in the debate surrounding his work, through books (cf. Breidbach 2006b and Stone 2003), lectures (cf. Christov-Bakargiev 1998 and 1999) and interviews (cf. Oppelt 1996) have in turn led to the debate, scholarship and commentaries being somewhat defined and influenced by Kentridge's own commentaries. This has resulted in the terms of debate inevitably concentrating on the relationship of Kentridge's works and memory but only to a very superficial level. The assumption here is that as Kentridge himself is not conversant with different academic discourses on theory dealing with, for instance, trauma and memory, his interpretations and commentaries are limited. As an authorial voice it is assumed that he has the final say on his work, although Kentridge himself is adverse to there being any authoritative, final interpretation of his works (Kentridge cited in Cameron; Christov-Bakargiev 1998; and Godby 1992). However, this limitation was overcome with the introduction (1994) of new discourses on memory and trauma. These new discourses provided this study with the tools to explicate how and why Kentridge portrayed / portrays what he did / does. Through these discourses, associations and interpretations never made before are now made clear, such as that of postmemory (Hirsch 1997). The extremely well-documented research that stated that Kentridge's works depicted memory could now be expounded upon, foregrounded in the theoretical discourse on memory.

The aim of this study is primarily to describe and critically analyse the representation of memory / memories within Kentridge's animated series. Therefore, the objectives of the research are: hermeneutic; exploratory; explanatory; and descriptive. The objective is hermeneutic because it interprets and analyses the textual-visual material being studied. The objective is also both exploratory and explanatory because it explains new knowledge, such as the different theories dealing with historical trauma, memory trauma, memory, and identity. This new knowledge is then used to explicate the latent meanings of Kentridge's visual texts. Lastly, the objective of this study is descriptive in that it seeks to identify themes and motifs within Kentridge's *Drawings for Projection* series.

1.3 Need and motivation for the research

The need for the study is founded on the fact that there is undoubtedly a lack of a theoretical framework from which to analyse and critique the themes found within Kentridge's films. Numerous journal articles, art books, art reviews and several post-graduate studies have analysed Kentridge's works. However, the majority of these works have focused on his artistic representations and are primarily found in visual arts studies. In addition to that, when the films are the focus of a study, the focus is on one or two of the films, but not on the series in its entirety⁹.

⁹ Cf. Alemani 2006; Belluigi, 2001; Benezra 2001; Bergman, 2010; Boris 2001; Cameron 2001; Chen, 2004; Christov-Bakargiev 1998 and 1999; Coetzee 1999; Coetzee 2001; Collier, 2004; Cooke 2001; Dubrow and Rosengarten 2004; Enwezor 1998; Enwezor 2007; Garza, 2011; Godby 1992; Hennlich 2010; Kentridge 1999b, 2001, 2006a, 2006b, 2006c, 2006d, 2007a, 2007b, 2007c; Krut 2006; Kucharski 2005; Law-Viljoen 2007a, 2007b, 2007c; Maltz, 2008;

1.4 Introduction and demarcation of subject area

The subject area of this study is described and demarcated in the title of the thesis: *Landscapes of the unconscious mind: a dialectic of self and memory on a post-colonial, South African landscape in the hand-animated, charcoal-medium films of William Kentridge*. “Landscapes” here is both a metaphorical reference and a literal one. Kentridge depicts the physical landscapes of South Africa — which are the most visible reminders of history as well as constituting the actualities of place, such as the Johannesburg Highveld; the Johannesburg rand mines; and the Johannesburg city landscape. He also depicts the fluid and ever-changing landscapes of the human mind (being, identity, the unconscious, and memory) through the ephemeral nature and process of his work. This is in turn a representation of memory and being, or memory and identity. Kentridge situates himself at the centre of these representations as both his characters Soho Eckstein and Felix Teitlebaum are drawn in his exact likeness. Kentridge also looks at the role of memory and history and the effects of history on the physical landscape (place), where artefacts are created, and landscapes are reshaped through architecture and engineering. In other words, Kentridge looks at the effect of apartheid on South Africa: its peoples; their land; their psyches; their communities; their cultures; and their way of life. By situating himself at the centre of his films and through his depiction of history, place and politics the viewer is presented with a subjective perspective of South Africa through a period time which extends from the height of apartheid and an enforced State of Emergency (1989) to the era of post post-apartheid (2003).

McIlleron 2003; Oliver-Smith, 1999; Oppelt 1999; Pai, 2003; Sasson (no date); Schoeman, 2007; Sitas 2001; Stewart 2006; Stone 2003; Taylor 2008; Thompson 2005; and Wilson 2006.

The thesis therefore analyses the following animated works of William Kentridge:

- *Johannesburg, 2nd Greatest City after Paris* (1989);
- *Monument* (1990);
- *Mine* (1991);
- *Sobriety, Obesity & Growing Old* (1991);
- *Felix in Exile* (1994);
- *History of the Main Complaint* (1996);
- *WEIGHING ... and WANTING* (1998);
- *Stereoscope* (1999); and
- *Tide Table* (2003).

These films comprise the *Drawings for Projection* series in its entirety (as of 2011).

It must be noted that this study in no way attempts to give a detailed analysis of every film produced in the *Drawings for Projection* series, nor does it study his films in a strictly linear or chronological manner. Also, it does not critique the aesthetics or focus on the specific visuals of his films. However, it does argue for how and why he engages with memory within a very specific South African context to represent themes of trauma, re-remembering, apartheid, guilt, responsibility and memorialisation.

Kentridge's art includes a wide range of aesthetic techniques and different mediums: lithographs; tapestries; still lifes; animated films; drawing; photography; stereography; etching; watermarking; bronze sculpture; artist's

books; flipbooks; set design; installations; performance in plays; writing, directing and producing plays; acting in, writing and directing films (such as the film *I & T¹⁰*); prints; and operas.

The discussion of these films is informed by Kentridge's other works in various mediums: his other animated works — both stand-alone films, and those made for multi-medium theatre productions which he has directed (including an opera, *The Magic Flute* (2007a), and several plays — for example, *Ubu and the Truth Commission* (1997)); other conventional plays in which he has been involved as director, actor, set designer, and contributor to collective scriptwriting initiatives (e.g. *Will of a Rebel*, 1979); a number of live-action or mixed live-action and animated films (e.g. *Salestalk*, 1984); documentaries (e.g. *David Goldblatt*, 1985); and his still artworks. However, these serve as secondary sources and are not the focus units of analysis.

1.5 Theoretical and conceptual foundations of the study

This study, through theoretical and analytical sampling, as well as comparative analysis, has provided the means to interpret Kentridge's films in a new and meaningful way, affording inimitable insight into the artist's works, for instance through relating the relatively "new" discourse on memory, circa 1994, to Kentridge's works. In addition to that, by explaining how Kentridge has depicted various themes such as identity and memory, trauma, and guilt, this study has highlighted the importance of Kentridge's works in the way that he has represented historical and cultural phenomena, such as those of apartheid and the decimation of the Herero peoples. Through this research, the way in which

¹⁰ Based on the myth of Tristan and Isolde.

Kentridge has provided astonishing and creative insight and understanding to culturally and historically specific contexts has been brought to the fore. This study has also contributed to the understanding and meaning of Kentridge's emergent themes and idiographic depictions of trauma, guilt, history, memory and identity in his *Drawings for Projection* animated film series.

Although there is an extensive body of critical work that already exists on Kentridge, this study has explicated new meanings and interpretations of his animated film series that add new knowledge and understanding to the field of scholarship of Kentridge's works. Different theories (for example theories that dealt with historical trauma, memory trauma, memory, identity) were used to elucidate the latent meanings of Kentridge's visual texts. Artistic sources of a comparable and similar nature were also selected (artists whose works dealt with the representation of the Holocaust, for example Joe Kubert and art spiegelman (*sic*)). These different comparative analyses investigated topics such as traumatic memory and their depiction in artistic works. This is an important, but hitherto unexamined perspective on Kentridge's films. This study also provides information to the ever-growing discourse on memory and trauma.

Different meanings and interpretations were elicited through the application of complex conceptual and theoretical sources, with specific reference to seminal works, such as those mentioned as primary sources (for instance, Sigmund Freud, Marianne Hirsch, Laura Mulvey and Roland Barthes) and supporting sources such as art reviews; newspaper reports; documentaries; journal articles; and book chapters.

1.6 Methodological research strategy

The research design itself is qualitative, with an emphasis on a descriptive analysis of the textual-visual material (i.e. William Kentridge's animated film series). This study explores the portrayal of memory and identity in William Kentridge's *Drawings for Projection* series by means of a qualitative content analysis, and since this is an exploratory study, this thesis attempts to answer the following main research problem:

Does William Kentridge's animated film series represent memory / memories?

The main research problem can be subdivided into the following sub-problems:

How does William Kentridge's animated series represent memories (his own and others)?¹¹ Whose memories does he represent? Why, if at all, does he depict memories in his films? Do Kentridge's animated films represent a specific South African political socio-historical period of time? Can Kentridge's films be considered an "authentic" form of documenting South African history?

The collection of data in this study is selective / purposive, and includes a multitude of both primary and secondary sources. The primary sources include: DVD's of William Kentridge's animated films *Drawings for projection*; the DVD of *Ubu Tells the Truth*; video of his *Drawing the Passing*, which filmed him making and drawing his film *Stereoscope*; screenplays of Kentridge's plays such as *Will of a Rebel*; home videos provided by the artist for the purposes of this study; attending his multi-media play productions such as *Woyzeck on the Highveld*;

¹¹ The "how" in this instance refers to the metaphorical representations, and not to the "how" in terms of Kentridge's drawing techniques.

attending art exhibitions of William Kentridge's still lifes, his installations, drawings, sculptures and photographs exhibited from his *Drawings for Projection* series and other works; attending his opera, *The Magic Flute*; attending his *Black Box / Chambre Noir* miniature, mechanical, theatre production; a book-length interview with Angela Breidbach. Primary sources also include reading and viewing comparative examples for study, such as: the DVD *Shoah* (Claude Lantzmann); memoirs of apartheid and the Holocaust (for example Elie Wiesel and Ruth Kluger); plays (for example Georg Tabori's plays; Jane Taylor's play *Ubu and the Truth Commission*); testimonies (the Holocaust and apartheid); fine art works (for example Anselm Kiefer); graphic novels (for example Art Spiegelman (*sic*): *Maus I* and *Maus II*; and Pascal Croci: *Auschwitz*); photographic and documentary material (such as: the Soweto uprising in South Africa; the Sharpeville massacre; armed forces during the occupation of townships in South Africa during apartheid; the Holocaust; and World War II); case studies; and art exhibitions. Seminal theoretical works used as primary data, and presented cogently in a literature review, include a selection of sources from authors: Sigmund Freud; Hayden White; Theodor Adorno; Walter Benjamin; Roland Barthes; Jean Baudrillard; Jacques Derrida; Julia Kristeva; Marianne Hirsch; Victor Burgin; and James E. Young.

Secondary sources of data selection include: news and newspaper articles (for example, news reports on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission¹²);

¹² South Africa's *Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, which was formed in 1996, was established to hear testimony from both perpetrators and victims for the purpose of retrieving lost stories and histories, bearing witness to atrocities, to make reparation for those who had suffered and to provide amnesty for the perpetrators of the atrocities of apartheid and South Africa's civil war. The emphasis was on reconciliation and to provide a new context of forgiveness in a post-apartheid and post-colonial era. Archbishop Desmond Tutu wrote in his

historical documentaries (covering diverse subjects such as the Holocaust; apartheid atrocities; civil wars); news footage; interviews; journal articles; reviews; books on William Kentridge's art works; numerous academic sources; and films. The review of both primary and secondary sources established that this is not a "replication study" but is a work of original research. In addition to these sources, the dissertation relies heavily on this author's personal observations.

Data collection occurred along the following lines: after first viewing Kentridge's two films at the Durban Film Festival in 1994, the researcher bought these films through the Film Resource Unit. Whenever the artist produced / created a new project, the researcher attended the installation, art exhibition or film viewing, such as his play *Woyzeck on the Highveld*; and *Ubu tells the Truth*. In addition to this, any art book or review was immediately bought or obtained for possible future research, such as *Drawings for Projection* by Michael Godby (1992); William Kentridge (Christov-Bakargiev 1998) and William Kentridge (Cameron, Christov-Bakargiev and Coetzee 1999). Having followed his career closely and considering that an in-depth study of his work might be worth undertaking, the researcher contacted the artist at his Houghton studio (and family home) and spoke to him of a possible doctoral research project (2000). He invited the

book *No Future without Forgiveness* that "True forgiveness deals with the past, all of the past, to make the future possible" (1999:279). Kadar Asmal, in the same vein, quotes Alexander Solzhenitsyn:

By not dealing with past human rights violations, we are not simply protecting the perpetrators' trivial old age; we are thereby ripping the foundations of justice from beneath new generations (cited in Krog 1998:37).

researcher to meet with him immediately at his studio. Kentridge was very enthusiastic about the project and in preparation provided extensive video material, (personal and copies of all his films); copies of his plays (extending back to his university days); videos of his outdoor work which featured the making of the art work for example, the making of *Memory and Geography* (with artist Doris Bloom, 1995). He also gave a detailed tour of his studio which included images from his films in the series as well as his current work in progress (at that time, early 2000, they were images from the film *Stereoscope*). Although it was not a formal interview, Kentridge explained his film-making process and many unknown details of his artistic technique were elaborated on, such as how he “paints” with loose charcoal powder. His insight into his own works was apparent, and it was very clear to the researcher why his own commentaries are highly valued and sought after. From then onwards, the artist and his curator Ms. Anne McIlleron, met any requests for information or copies of films. Also, and most importantly, Kentridge provided this author copyright to use his work in any future research, such as the (then) proposed doctoral study and articles and seminars.

The sampling criteria: any installations, still lifes, or art works relating to the *Drawings for Projection* series. The preliminary data consisted of all nine films: this was based on the accessibility and availability of Kentridge’s works. Obviously not every one of Kentridge’s works are now available, for instance the play *Ubu and the Truth Commission* only performed for a short period in the late 1990s and there have been no repeat performances since then. Many of the plays Kentridge wrote, directed and performed in, such as *Will of a Rebel*

and *Faustus in Africa!*, were performed in the late 1980s and were therefore completely inaccessible except in their written form. As Kentridge's series of nine films had come to an end in 2003 with the creation of *Tide Table* and all were accessible, it was decided that this would be the actual sample for analysis. However, in addition to these nine films for analysis, any accompanying works, such as drawings, etchings, tapestries, prints or still lifes relating directly to any of the nine films in the series would also be analysed as they form an extension of the films themselves¹³.

1.7 Definitions of key terms

A *Terminological Synopses of Concepts* was included to avoid any misconceptions of the several significant terms that are used throughout this thesis, such as postmemory, *fortuna*, and intertextuality. These terms are included as a prelude to the thesis and are presented prior to *Chapter One*.

1.8 Layout of the thesis

The thesis comprises ten chapters. *Chapter One*, the introduction, details the research design and limitations of the study as well as the contributions it makes and outlines the different chapters briefly. *Chapters Two* and *Three* are Literature Reviews. The former deals specifically with the substantive works on William Kentridge and it also includes a brief summary of each of the nine films that make up the *Drawings for Projection* series. The latter chapter introduces the reader to the seminal works that are used throughout this study. This *Chapter Three* will also provide the motivation for utilising certain concepts

¹³ An example of this is the drawing series *Sleeping on Glass*, which were drawn as part of the *Stereoscope* film installation.

within this dissertation. *Chapter Four* explains how and why this study makes use of qualitative research methods. *Chapter Five* focuses on theoretical conceptualisations of memory and how they are to be applied in the understanding of William Kentridge's works. It also examines the way in which one can take on the traumatic memories of others (a process known as postmemory), such that they have the same impact on oneself as one's own "real" memories. *Chapter Six* examines the effects of traumatic (i.e. tormenting) memory on the individual; the relationship between traumatic memory and postmemory; memory and dreams; and screen memories. *Chapter Seven* focuses on how traumatic events have been depicted artistically, and questions whether such representations are ethically justifiable. It specifically looks at the different artistic mediums of the graphic novel and film. The concepts that are raised within this field are applied to Kentridge's films. The concepts of history, time, space and identity and their relationship to memory are the specific focus of *Chapter Eight*. Lastly, the different concepts of landscapes, cities and monuments are all prevalent within Kentridge's films. How they are depicted and their relationship to memory are discussed within *Chapter Nine*. The dissertation concludes with *Chapter Ten*, which provides an overview of some of the artistic projects William Kentridge has produced since his last film in the *Drawings for Projection* series was made (*Tide Table* — 2003). This chapter also mentions Kentridge's very latest artistic endeavours and then provides a very brief summation of the thesis itself. Lastly, it provides suggestions for further research.

1.9 Contributions and limitations of this study

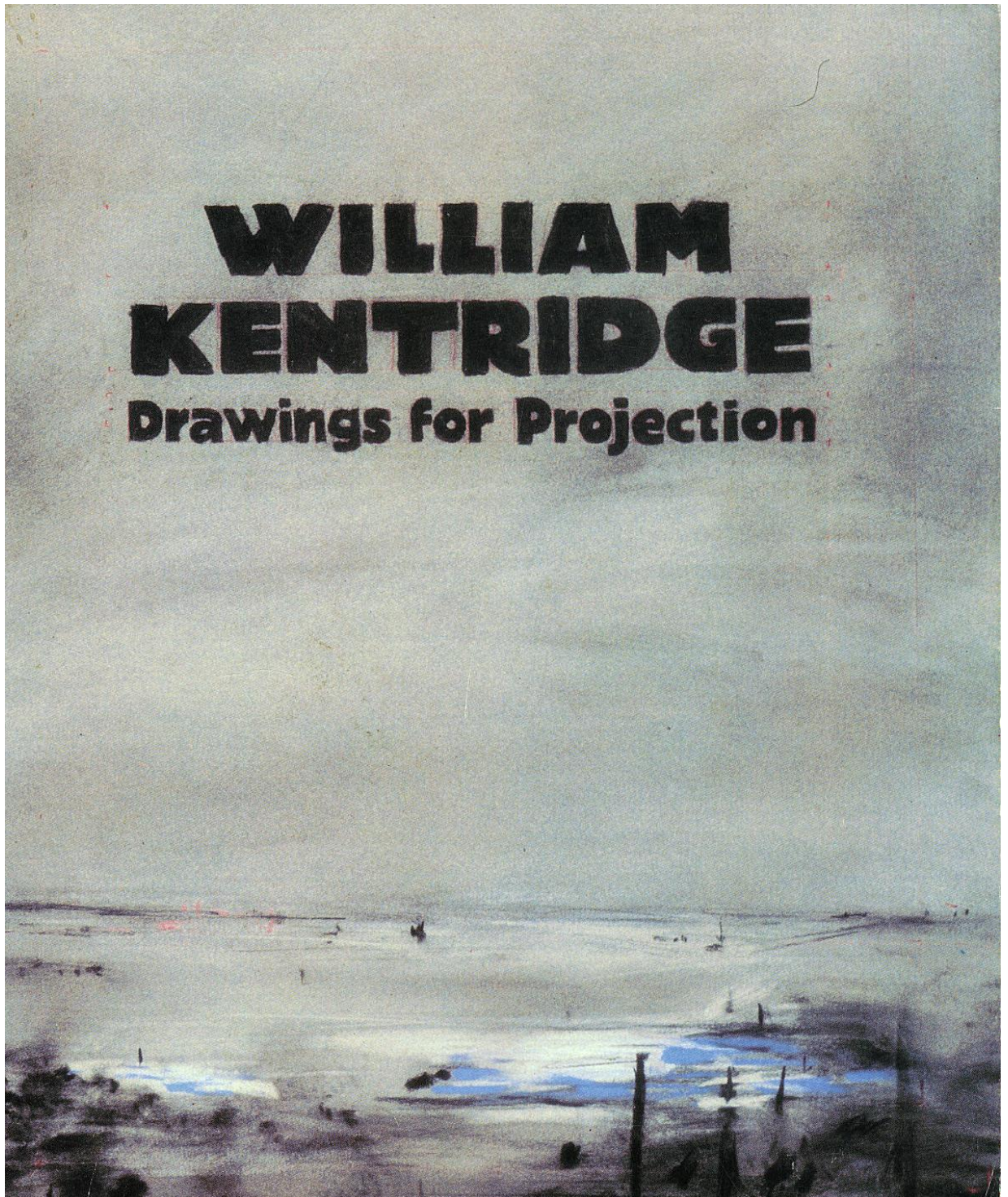
It is the “manner” in which Kentridge depicts the unconscious, memory and identity that is the very basis of this thesis. It is from that basis that it makes the following contributions: to the scholarship on Kentridge’s work; to a South African perspective to the growing field of trauma studies; and to the apartheid and post-apartheid reflections on re-remembering and forgetting, memorialisation, forgiveness and guilt.

The challenge and limitation of this research design methodology as applied in this dissertation is mostly one of over-generalisation. The other limitation is that the sampling method was purposive. William Kentridge is a prolific artist working in artistic mediums of sculpture (bronze, paper, iron), plays, operas, still lifes, prints, tapestries, and etchings. However, it is the animated film *Drawings for Projection* series that was selected as the primary sample to be studied because it is highly representative of his *oeuvre*. Even though Kentridge’s other works have been referred to, the series is clearly demarcated and only allows for brief comparisons and references to his other artistic works, and this is primarily due to time constraints.

1.10 Conclusion

This chapter introduces the focus of the study, discusses the objectives and demarcations and research design of the study.

The next chapter, *Chapter Two*, is a literature review on Kentridge's works.



(Godby 1992: the front cover of the book).

CHAPTER TWO: WILLIAM KENTRIDGE: LITERATURE REVIEW (*PART I*)

The extensive writings on Kentridge are divided into two very different kinds of works. The one caters for an art audience, is mostly descriptive and deals with very specific subjects and very detailed descriptions of the artist's *oeuvre*. The emphasis is on colour reproductions and photographs of the artist and his artistic creations. The second kind of writings caters for an academic or scholarly audience and is a discourse that has emerged mainly from journal articles and post-graduate studies. These are pre-dominantly analytical in nature and their critiques of Kentridge's works are elucidated on in this chapter. Both writings proffer insight and analysis of Kentridge's work and both are invaluable. This chapter therefore deals with both approaches and writings on and about Kentridge's films. The first section assesses the literature from art books, art critiques, art reviews, and interviews.¹ The second section reviews the academic and scholastic writings about Kentridge's works.

2.1 Part I: Art books

These books also have several foci in common: they detail Kentridge's background, both personal and artistic; they emphasise his artistic influences; they focus on the most recent work of Kentridge's; and they almost always include a retrospective of his *oeuvre*. These retrospectives are significant of, and by, themselves. They offer an overview of Kentridge's development as an artist. Some of the most noteworthy inclusions in these books focus on the themes inherent in his works; in addition to this, they almost always include an interview or foreword by the artist himself. While

¹ Newspaper reports, which range from *Die Beeld* to the *Mail & Guardian* to the *New York Times*, are simply too numerous to include in this study. Anyone who has a particular interest in these reviews and reports can access them through the Goodman Gallery's online archive.

they are extremely important, they are limited by what they accentuate. And while several academics have contributed by writing essays that are included in these books, the nature and style of the essays remain essentially descriptive with some interpretation or “reading” of Kentridge’s works. One of the exceptions that falls within this collective literature on Kentridge is his interview with Angela Breidbach. It is a book-long interview that is appositely titled *Thinking Aloud: Conversations with Angela Breidbach* (2006), and contains many small doodles and several black and white reproductions from Kentridge’s works, including of course, his animated films.

These art books are not only descriptive in writing style but are also considered to be, colloquially put, “coffee-table books”. In other words, their (perceived) worth is predominantly in the reproductions of Kentridge’s art works, accompanied by detailed descriptions. However, many of these art books have made an extremely significant contribution to the understanding and interpretation of Kentridge’s artworks, and it would be completely remiss of this study to ignore them. In fact, this thesis argues that they are the foundational works that make up the extensive literatures on Kentridge, including the scholastic writings on Kentridge’s *oeuvre*.

For instance, one of the most notable contributions that these art books make to the on-going critical enquiry into Kentridge’s works are the inclusion of screenshots from his films as well as photographs of the installations that often accompany a screening of his films at a museum. This allows access to his compilations when they are inaccessible by either time or geography. These screenshots and other *objets d’art* attached to the films, such as his still lifes, can therefore be analysed in

detail and a sense of their temporal-spatial *mise-en-scène* can be appreciated in the way that it was meant to be — in context; but at a distance and often retrospectively. For example, in *Chapter Six: Memory and Trauma* of this thesis, an analysis of six etchings is proffered. These etchings, collectively entitled *Sleeping on Glass*, as well as an installation, showing discarded mining and industrial machinery, were exhibited as an extension of Kentridge's film *Stereoscope*. The film was also screened, projected onto a sculpture that doubled up as a screen. This particular installation was only exhibited at the Villa Medici in Rome in 1999. Without their inclusion in these foundational art books, the detailed critique of the exhibit would not have been afforded to this researcher (cf: *Chapter Six: Memory and Trauma*; Alemani 2006; Christov-Bakargiev 1999: 81; Benezra, Boris, Cooke, Sitas and Cameron 2001:134-135).

Thus, *Part I* of this chapter provides a review of these foundational literatures which includes: Kentridge's personal background; his artistic endeavours prior to his animated film series²; his artistic influences; discussion of his artistic animated technique; a brief overview of the nine films in the series; and, the themes found in his films.

2.1.1 Kentridge's personal background

William Kentridge is a secular Jew whose father is the renowned anti-apartheid activist lawyer, Sir Sydney Kentridge, who was involved in most of the key political cases in South Africa in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s (Alemani 2006:10; Cameron 1999:40; Christov-Bakargiev 1998:13; Christov-Bakargiev 1999:35). These cases

² *William Kentridge: Five Themes*, edited by Mark Rosenthal, incorporates a complete chronology of Kentridge's artworks up to the year 2009 (2009).

included the Steve Biko³ inquest in 1977, the Treason trial and Nelson Mandela⁴ trial. His mother, Felicia Kentridge, is also an attorney, who instituted the Legal Resources Centre which provides legal assistance for individuals who are unable to pay for any (Alemani 2006:10; Christov-Bakargiev 1998:13-15; Cameron 1999:40). His maternal great-grandfather fled to South Africa just before the South African War at the end of the nineteenth century, escaping the incessant Pogroms of Eastern Europe. His paternal great-grandfather also immigrated to South Africa at the outset of the 20th century and changed his ethnic family name “Kantorowitz” to that of Kentridge (Christov-Bakargiev 1998:13). Interestingly, his maternal grandmother, Irene Newmark, was the first female barrister in South Africa. His grandfather, Morris Kentridge, was also a lawyer and a parliamentarian for the Labour Party and he was incarcerated for being a socialist in the 1920s (Christov-Bakargiev 1998:13). Kentridge was brought up in Johannesburg and has lived in his childhood Houghton home for most of his life as he and his family (his wife Anne and their three children) moved back into his family home after his parents divorced and his father emigrated to England (Alemani 2006:10).

³ Stephen Bantu Biko (1946-1977) originated the Black Conscious Movement in South Africa in the late 1960s. He was incarcerated and brutally tortured and beaten to death. As a result of local and international pressure there were several inquests held to determine the cause of death. This inquest, however, had the police claiming that Biko died after embarking on a hunger strike. Independent sources, however, stated that he was murdered by the police. The inquest attributed his death to a “prison accident”; although evidence presented at the inquest revealed that he had been viciously tortured and murdered. The outcome of the inquest was not accepted. Despite this, Biko's death caused an international outcry, which increased the pressure on the South African government to abolish its detention policies and called for an international probe on the cause of his death. It took another eight years and intense pressure before the SAMDC took disciplinary action against two doctors who treated Steve Biko during the five days before he died (SA history online ... 2012).

⁴ The Nelson Mandela Trial is also known as the “Rivonia Trial”. It took place in Johannesburg in 1963 when Mandela and 10 other anti-apartheid activists went on trial for sabotage, treason, terrorism and conspiracy. They were all found guilty (SA history online ... 2012).

William Kentridge's personal background is repeated in almost every book or review about him. Hence, while it might seem unnecessarily repetitive to include here, this study argues that it is absolutely imperative that Kentridge's personal heritage and background is known as it not only informs his own works, as this research will show, but by extension it therefore also informs this study. For instance, Kentridge's ancestry includes both a Lithuanian-Jewish and German-Jewish lineage (Alemani 2006:10; Christov-Bakargiev 1998:13-15; Cameron 1999:40). Had his paternal great-grandfather not immigrated to South Africa before World War II, there would be no William Kentridge or Kentridge lineage to speak of, as Jews living in Lithuania were all slaughtered by the Nazis. In addition, Kentridge himself makes many revealing remarks about the Holocaust and genocide and this also allows for a strong comparative study with Kentridge's works and those art works that are representative of the Holocaust, which is expounded on in *Chapter Nine* of this thesis: *Memory, Landscapes, Cities and Monuments*. Even the fact that Kentridge grew up in an anti-apartheid environment is significant to know as it sheds light on his knowledge of apartheid atrocities and the abnormal situations and abhorrent conditions of this highly dichotic society. He was aware of these atrocities long before South African society at large was aware of them; he also had first-hand information of these atrocities from the cases that his father took up as a trial lawyer. He was exposed to them long before they became general knowledge or were exposed at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in 1996 (Kentridge cited in Christov-Bakargiev 1998:13; Kentridge cited in Cameron 1999:40). One of the most meaningful, and certainly harrowing, experiences for Kentridge was an incident that occurred when he was still a child, Kentridge relates it thus:

At the time, I was six years old and my father was one of the lawyers for the families of the people who had been killed [in the Sharpeville⁵ massacre in 1960]. I remember coming once into his study and seeing on his desk a large, flat, yellow Kodak box, and lifting the lid off of it — it looked like a chocolate box. Inside were images of a woman with her back blown off, someone with only half her head visible. The impact of seeing these images for the first time — when I was six years old — the shock — was extraordinary (cited in Christov-Bakargiev 1998:13).

Another disturbing childhood experience for Kentridge was when he was driving with his grandfather and they saw four or five men kicking a third man who was lying in a gutter at the edge of a road⁶. These experiences made Kentridge realise, at a very young age (five years), that the world was not as he conceived it. Having knowledge of these early, troubling childhood experiences is important because these experiences have been referenced in his work, most especially in *Felix in Exile* (1994) and *History of the Main Complaint* (1996). This then allows for deeper insight into his works. Firstly, it shows undoubtedly that these are indeed very personal works of art; secondly Kentridge has again placed himself at the very centre of this narrative by including these incidences in his films; and thirdly, his films are a form of bearing witness, years later, to apartheid atrocities that he had witnessed first-hand.

Even the somewhat innocuous fact that Kentridge lives in Houghton is important, simply because of its geography. The upper-class suburb is directly adjacent to the township of Alexandra. Many homes in the opulent suburb often protect their houses and perfectly landscaped gardens with high walls topped with razor wire. The

⁵ Kentridge's father, Sir Sidney Kentridge, served as counsel for the victims' families. His father was knighted in 1999 by the Queen for his immense contribution to human rights (SA history online ... 2012).

⁶ This incident occurred in Valley Road, which is a road that turns off a main road, Jan Smuts Avenue in Johannesburg (Goldberg and Kentridge 2001:96).

significance of this to this study is that it shows that not only has Kentridge observed the difference in living environments, vis-à-vis the “haves” and the “have-nots” but he has chosen to represent them in his films. For instance, in *Johannesburg, 2nd Greatest City after Paris*, he depicts these schizophrenic living conditions. Also, it reveals that he chooses to tell his own stories and the untold stories of the marginalised: for instance he represents his own very comfortable suburban life in *WEIGHING ... and WANTING*, even including images of his own wife, Anne Stanwix; while in the films *Johannesburg, 2nd Greatest City after Paris*, *Mine*, *Monument*, and *Felix in Exile* he depicts the stories of the working-class, the oppressed, the subalterns. He often juxtaposes the two extreme living conditions with one another, as found in the film *Mine*; and the apposition of luxury and poverty, residing next to one another, just as the upper-classes of Houghton live next door to the poverty-stricken township dwellers of Alexandra (this is discussed in further detail in *Chapter Nine: Memory, Landscapes, Cities and Monuments*).

Also, with regard to one of the main characters portrayed in his *Drawings for Projection* series, Soho Eckstein, Kentridge has stated that he is a “model” for this character (cited in Christov-Bakargiev 1998:13). He has elaborated on this by stating that this character is a “displaced self-portrait: that there is a strong male family resemblance down the generations” (Kentridge cited in Christov-Bakargiev 1998:13; cf. Alemani 2006:13, 47 and 81; Benezra 2001:15; Cameron 1999:45; Coetzee 1999:86). He has also stated that in some images in his first film *Johannesburg, 2nd Greatest City after Paris* the character Soho Eckstein looks very similar to his maternal grandfather (Kentridge cited in Christov-Bakargiev 1998:13). This is noteworthy as this study positions both the central characters Soho Eckstein

and Felix Teitlebaum as being facets of the artist himself. It is therefore fundamental to this thesis' argument that Kentridge represents not only collective cultural and political memories, but personal ones as well, in his animated series. It positions Kentridge, his self, his identity, in constant dialogue and dialectic with his own unconscious as well as the collective unconscious. In a rather perspicacious statement cited in Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev's book in 1998, Kentridge comments on how his main character Soho Eckstein resembles his paternal grandfather Morris and early on in his career he did a linocut based on an old photograph of his grandfather sitting on the beach in Muizenberg, in Cape Town, in a pinstriped suit. The pinstriped suit is the character Soho Eckstein's constant dress. Many years later, Kentridge completed the last film in this series, entitled *Tide Table* (2003). In it he includes a drawing of Soho/Felix on the beach, all alone, in a deck chair and wearing a pinstriped suit. In an interview with Claire Wegener, Kentridge stated that his character Soho/Felix was on holiday in Muizenburg, Cape Town (2006:271). This provides further evidence that Kentridge's character / s is / are a facet of himself. Here you also have a statement made in 1998 coming full circle with his proclamation made in 2006, with reference to the last film made in his filmic series (*Tide Table* 2003). Please see *Chapter Eight: Memory, History, Identity, Time and Space* for further elucidation on this argument.

Knowing that Johannesburg has been his home for all of his life, barring a year in France while studying at the *l'École Jacques Lecoc* (Alemani 2006:10; Cameron, Christov-Bakargiev and Coetzee 1999; Christov-Bakargiev 1998:15), is also extremely relevant. In interviews Kentridge speaks very fondly of his family home and of Johannesburg. His love of the rather desparate province is apparent in his films. This is another example of the importance of noting Kentridge's personal

background. His very first film of the series pays tribute to the city in its very title. All his films in the series feature some aspect of the city, from the dry, sandy Highveld, to the Rand mines to the cityscapes, suburbia-scapes and the landscapes. This affection that Kentridge has for Johannesburg and how he situates himself within it and how it features within his films is analysed predominantly in *Chapter Nine: Memory, Landscapes, Cities and Monuments*. Another piece of autobiographical information that sheds light on his drawing process is revealed. His mother's name, Felicia, became the name for one of the central characters in his cinematic series, Felix Teitlebaum⁷. However, he was only aware of the unconscious association sometime after naming his alter ego. This is yet another example that reveals how his biographical details, his early socialisation, childhood experiences and lived environment, both social and geographical, are intrinsic to his films. Kentridge experimented with many different artistic mediums prior to his cinematic series. It is to this that the chapter now turns.

2.1.2 Kentridge's artistic endeavours prior to his animated film series

The art books always include some information on Kentridge's artistic undertakings prior to his commencement of the *Drawings for Projection* series. In 1975, while studying a Bachelor of Arts (majoring in Politics and African Studies) at the University of the Witwatersrand, he co-founded the Junction Avenue Theatre Company — a non-racial theatre company based in Johannesburg and the township of Soweto. His previous work leading up to his animated films includes writing, directing and acting in several plays: he performed in the play *Ubu Rex* (1975), an

⁷ Kentridge, Rinder, Rosenthal and Silverman (2009), podcast, Round Table discussion at the University of California Berkeley, on 16 March 2009. (Accessed 2010/June/22.)

adaption of Alfred Jarry's *Ubu Roi*; co-authored, designed and acted in the play *The Fantastical History of a Useless Man* (1976); co-authored and performed in the play *Randlords and Rotgut*; acted as Tristan Tzara in *Travesties* (1978); collaborated and performed in *Security* (1979); directed *Will of a Rebel* (1979) written by Ari Sitas; *Dikhitsheneng: "The Kitchens": a farcical play* (1980); he co-directed the video fiction *Howl at the Moon* with Hugo Cassirer and Malcolm Purkey (1981); he made the film *Salestalk* (1984); he directed the play *Catastrophe* written by Samuel Becket (1984). From 1976 to 1978 he studied fine art with Bill Ainslie. He completed his first animated film *Title / Tale* in collaboration with Stephen Sack and Jemima Hunt in 1978. He took part in exhibitions from 1978. His first group exhibition, and his first solo exhibition were in 1979 at the Market Gallery in Johannesburg. Kentridge also studied mime at the *l'École Jacques Lecoc* (1981-1982).

At first glance this summary of Kentridge's endeavours prior to the creation of his animated series might seem peripheral or superfluous. However this is not necessarily the case. There are many themes and motifs that have their roots in Kentridge's early works. For instance, the play *Randlords and Rotgut* (1978), which is based on the essay written by Charles van Onselen, concerns the plight of the mine workers on the Rand goldmines found in the Witwatersrand area. The mine workers endured extreme hardships working underground in very dangerous conditions. They were paid poorly and they lived in hostels away from their wives and children. A culture of alcoholism and prostitution became a way of life. These themes are resurrected in the *Drawings for Projection* series, most notably in the film *Mine*. This film has several disturbing images depicting the horrors of life in the subterranean world of gold mining. For example, the hostels are portrayed as rows upon rows of shelves containing decapitated heads — disembodied, hideous. A

scene where the protagonist of the series, Soho Eckstein, the owner and exploiter of the miners, lies in his bed where a coffee plunger moves through the bed, through the mines and into a slave ship, makes a very emphatic statement — the miners are no different to those slaves held captive on the slave ship.

Another example of the relevance of this information to the understanding and contextualisation of Kentridge's films is that of the Beckett play *Catastrophe*. Kentridge's entire film *Monument* (1990), the second film in the series, is based on this play. Very simply, the play is about a man, the protagonist, standing completely still on a theatre stage as an autocratic director and his female assistant put the final touches to the scene he is directing. Author Sportelli defines the play as "an action bringing ruin and pain on stage, where corpses are seen and wounds and other similar sufferings are performed" (1988:126). This description of the play is useful in critiquing Kentridge's film *Monument* which is dealt with in *Chapter Nine* of this dissertation.

2.1.3 Kentridge's artistic influences

William Kentridge's influences and artistic references include: German Expressionism⁸; Goya^{9 10}; the post-Cubism of Max Beckmann^{11 12}; William Hogarth¹³

⁸ Cf. Cameron 1999; Christov-Bakargiev 1998; Christov-Bakargiev 1999; Coetzee 1999; Kentridge 1998 and 1999; Kentridge cited in Cameron, Christov-Bakargiev and Coetzee 1999.

⁹ Francisco José de Goya y Lucientes (1747-1828).

¹⁰ Cf. Alemani 2006:9-11 and 21; Kentridge cited in Cameron, Christov-Bakargiev and Coetzee 1999; Christov-Bakargiev 1998; Godby 1990.

¹⁴; Berlin Dada^{15 16}; Russian Futurism^{17 18}; Constructivism^{19 20}; and Russian Formalism²¹ (these latter three movements are also referenced in the fact that theirs were considered a socially involved art)²². German Expressionism is referenced not only with regard to the artists' works but also to that of film makers of the movement, who used techniques such as surrealistic drawings and the discarding of distinct outlines (Kuhn and Knight 1999:67). In fact, this thesis argues that his work is mostly referenced by German Expressionistic filmmaking²³ (Kentridge cited in Christov-Bakargiev 1998:14-15), certainly more so than German Expressionism artwork / paintings, as the latter of course espouses bright, surreal colours, while Kentridge does not. Furthermore, this thesis also argues that Russian Formalist filmmaking is

¹¹ Born 1884, died 1950.

¹² Cf. Alemani 2006:10-11; Benezra 2001: 14,15; Christov-Bakargiev 1998 and 1999; Kentridge cited in Cameron, Christov-Bakargiev and Coetzee 1999:103-105.

¹³ Born 1697, died 1764.

¹⁴ Cf. Alemani 2006:11 and 21; Cameron 1999; Christov-Bakargiev 1998; Christov-Bakargiev 1999; Godby 1990.

¹⁵ Art movement circa 1918-1922.

¹⁶ Cf. Kentridge cited in Christov-Bakargiev 1999:14; cf. Alemani 2006:11; Christov-Bakargiev 1998.

¹⁷ Cf. Christov-Bakargiev 1998 and 1999; Coetzee 1999; Kentridge cited in Christov-Bakargiev 1999:15 and 105.

¹⁸ Art movement circa 1910-1920.

¹⁹ Art movement circa 1919-1929.

²⁰ Cf. Alemani 2006:12 and 52-53; Christov-Bakargiev 1998 and 1999; Coetzee 1999; Kentridge cited in Christov-Bakargiev 1999:15 and 105.

²¹ Russian Formalism is sometimes referred to as Soviet *Montagism*.

²² Cf. Christov-Bakargiev 1998 and 1999; Coetzee 1999; Kentridge cited in Christov-Bakargiev 1999:15 and 105.

²³ German Expressionist filmmakers include: Paul Wegener, *The Golem* (1914); Robert Wiene, *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari* (1919); Fritz Lang, *Metropolis* (1925); and Friedrich Murnau, *Nosferatu* (1922).

an influence in Kentridge's works, both in terms of stylistic filmic techniques (predominantly with the use of *montage*) and in terms of their socially engaged art²⁴. Please see *Chapter Eight* for a brief exposition on this. It is the Russian Formalist documentary filmmaker Dziga Vertov who coined the term "Kino-Eye" or cinematic eye — referring to what the eye does not see, or rather to the X-Ray eye (discovered after watching films in slow motion and realising that in the process of film making, there is much that is on celluloid that the eye does not consciously see) (1973:79). The Russian Formalists, most especially Sergei Eisenstein, used the philosopher Georg Hegel's (1770-1831) revolutionary formula that antithesis plus thesis equals synthesis²⁵ with the aim of exciting their audience (Feaster 1993:24). Their rapidly, multiple-imaged films create a never-ending discourse. How this is relevant to Kentridge's films is explained below, where his artistic technique is discussed. Although both German Expressionism and Russian Formalism are influences on Kentridge's work, it must be noted that these two film movements are diametrically opposed to one another. For instance, the German Expressionists placed great emphasis on an individual's experience rather than a national collective experience. German Expressionists focussed on the character's psychology — on terror, pathos and agony. This is antithetical to the Russian Formalists, who focussed their filmmaking on social / radical events. German Expressionist film making also completely and totally rejects realism. Kentridge's films, however, do both: they focus on an individual, Soho Eckstein and Felix Teitlebaum, but they also focus on South

²⁴ Russian Formalist filmmakers include: Lev Kuleshov, Vsevolod Pudovkin, Alexander Dovzhenko, and Sergei Eisenstein (as well as documentary film makers Dziga Vertov and Esther Shub). Sergei Eisenstein is most famous for his film *Battleship Potemkin* (1925) and Vsevolod Pudovkin is most famous for his film: *Mother* (1926).

²⁵ In filmic terms this refers to the juxtaposing of two different cinematic images (antithesis plus thesis) to produce a new idea or image (synthesis).

Africa's social events of a specific culturally defined time, that is, for example, apartheid's State of Emergency. Kentridge himself has stated that the themes of German Expressionist filmmakers and the Russian Formalists which used their own emotive feelings of anger to raise social consciousness paralleled his own feelings of anger and social responsibility (cited in Christov-Bakargiev 1999:15; cf. Coetzee 1999:92). Of course, the social awareness and anger towards the inhumanity and atrocities that Kentridge refers to speaks directly to the socio-political and cultural period of his time: apartheid. In terms of being influenced technically, both these filmic movements can be referenced; for instance, Kentridge makes use of the Russian Formalist's cinematic styles, for example in *Stereoscope*. He uses montage; split screens; isolated close-ups; disjointed continuities; jump-cuts; vertiginous camera vantage points. He juxtaposes a violent dystopian society with that of a homebound melancholy protagonist. However, using the same filmic example he also makes use of German Expressionist filmic styles: close-ups of Soho/Felix's pathos; surrealistic imagery, such as the static or electric blue cat, which continuously morphs and brings with it the extremes of both comfort and annihilation. There are also the portrayals of a nightmarish and hallucinatory society whose dark, shadowy elements are perpetrators of violence, terrorism and thuggery. Kentridge also incorporates the use of chiaroscuro lighting²⁶. All these are stylistic rudiments of German Expressionist filmmaking. The fact that both film movements, and many different artists, can be referenced as influences on his work, both in terms of artistic style and themes is a testament to the "uniqueness"²⁷ of Kentridge's

²⁶ This refers to Kentridge's drawing technique and not as lighting set up for a *mis-en-scène*.

²⁷ Cf. Rosalind Krauss in her article entitled *The Rock: William Kentridge's "Drawings for Projection"* discusses his animated technique and argues for "the uniqueness of Kentridge's medium", and that his innovative animated process "invents a medium" (2000:8). Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev suggests rather that although Kentridge's technique of drawing and erasure are not unique to Kentridge, it is

work and the fact that it is actually quite difficult to try and categorise his work neatly and definitively.

With regard to his collaborations with the Handspring Puppet Company, specifically with director Basil Jones and Adrian Kohler for their works *Faustus in Africa!*, *Ubu and the Truth Commission*, and *Woyzeck on the Highveld*, artistic inferences can be made directly with Japanese Bunraku²⁸; pre-colonial African puppet theatre and English puppetry (Christov-Bakargiev 1998:18-19). Also in terms of themes, such as the inclusion of recurring motifs, for example, dreams, mirrors and labyrinths, Kentridge has referenced magic realist writer Jorge Luis Borges (Christov-Bakargiev 1998:19).

Kentridge himself has expressly stated that the most significant local artist to influence him was Dumile Feni²⁹. While studying at artist Bill Ainslie's art studio Kentridge encountered Feni working there. According to Kentridge, it was Feni's large scale "demonic" charcoal drawings that made him understand the power and expression of charcoal (Kentridge cited in Christov-Bakargiev 1998:27; cf. Alemani

the manner in which he employs it to express "a metaphor for the loss of historical memory — the amnesia to which injustice, racism and brutality are subjected in society" that is of significance (2004:32). See also Tom Gunning: *Stereoscope: Doubled Vision peering through Kentridge's "Stereoscope"* (2001).

²⁸ Created in Osaka in 1684, the theatre production includes three performers on stage, including the puppeteers (Brazell 1998:115-124). This is similar in style to the Kentridge collaborations which have both the puppets and the puppeteers appearing on stage as an integrated part of the production. More typical puppet shows have only the puppets on stage, with the puppeteers coordinating the strings from behind the scenes and hidden away.

²⁹ His full name is Zwelidumile Geelboi Mgxaji Mslaba Feni (1942-1991). He was known as the "Township Goya" (cf. Campbell-Smith 2004; Dumile Foundation; Sack 1988).

2006:10; Benezra 2001:12)³⁰. Feni's portrayals included scenes of everyday township life, poverty and the brutality found in townships (cf. Christov-Bakargiev 1998; Dumile Foundation; and Johans Boorman's on-line Museum of South African Art). Another artist who is referenced is German artist Anselm Kiefer, albeit extremely briefly (cf. Alemani 2006:14-15; Christov-Bakargiev 1998). It is important to note this brief reference as *Chapter Nine: Memory, Landscapes, Cities and Monuments* of this thesis elaborates on this influence and does a comparative analysis between the two artists.

In terms of Landscape Art, this too has been referenced as a source of incentive for Kentridge's works, although in a rather adverse manner. Rather than emulate the Romanticist, colonial depictions of South Africa, such as those of Jan Ernest Abraham Volschenk³¹ and J. H. Peerneef³², which depicted the South African and African landscapes with exotic lushness and verdure, Kentridge chose to depict the landscapes as he saw them (Cameron 1999:47-50; Christov-Bakargiev 1998:26; Kentridge cited in Christov-Bakargiev 1999:22; 109-110). That is, he chooses to depict the landscapes that are embedded with the human condition, with humanity. From his contributions to his conversations with Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev (1998:26; cf. Alemani 2006:45; Coetzee 1999:84-85) he seems to be challenging that version of landscape history. He contests the perfectly portrayed Romantic ideal. He therefore renders the landscape as he sees it: scarred and pitted with

³⁰ Dan Cameron in his book, *William Kentridge*, published in 1999, incorrectly states that Kentridge's work can be directly tied to Dumile Feni's Expressionistic work and "with whom he studied" (1999:41). Kentridge was a teenager taking night time art classes at his art teacher Bill Ainslie's home when Feni often visited, but Feni left South Africa in 1968. Kentridge's works are certainly influenced by his work as he himself has clearly stated (Kentridge cited in Christov-Bakargiev 1998:26), but it is remiss to dismiss the other German Expressionistic influences on Kentridge.

³¹ Born 1853, died 1936.

³² Born 1886, died 1957.

mines; traumatised and raped through constant exploitation from the rand mines; littered with old mining debris and old electrical pyres; dry; stripped of its fertility and bereft of life, absolutely desolate. Most importantly, he sees the landscapes as a text to be deconstructed. These depictions are central to his films, most specifically *Johannesburg, 2nd Greatest City after Paris*, *Mine*, *Felix in Exile*, and *WEIGHING ... and WANTING*. These ideas are explicated on in *Chapter Nine*, where Kentridge's depictions of landscapes are linked to the concept of geography and memory. He also challenges the artistic notion of "Landscape Art" by using the land as a drawing board, in collaboration with artist Doris Bloom. In a series of artistic creations they first drew an anatomically correct heart in the Rome landscape and then they drew a huge gate with an emblematic heart, in Newtown Johannesburg, which they set alight. As such, they challenged both the Land Art of the 1960s and Landscape Art. The former is a movement whereby artists changed the actual, physical landscape for artistic purposes. The latter deals with any recording — photographs, paintings, filming, drawings — of landscapes in their natural formations, recorded *in situ* (Büttner 2006). Kentridge does neither, rather he and Bloom create images on top of barren land and then record those images (cf. *Chapter Nine*).

2.1.4 A discussion of Kentridge's artistic animated technique

All these books have another theme in common. They include a discussion and a description of the drawing technique used by Kentridge. He usually works on a large sheet of paper — which sometimes covers an entire wall of his studio. Working between drawing and a still camera which he uses to film the drawings, he moves painstakingly between the two. An image drawn, using charcoal (the residue of fire),

is changed, erased; all the time he steps back from the process to photograph the changes, the erasures and the metamorphosis of the images in question. Kentridge's filmmaking technique consists of making a series of charcoal drawings, using charcoal sticks as well as charcoal dust, with which he literally paints³³. Sometimes he uses blue pastel — usually to identify and separate the images from one another — to illustrate water, which symbolises cleanliness, anxiety³⁴, innocence, and femaleness / sexuality (cf. Alemani 2006:22, 33 and 93; Cameron 1999:66; Godby 1992: unpaginated)³⁵. He occasionally uses red pastel as well — these red strokes tend to symbolise anger, geography and even death.³⁶ He makes a series of drawings which he then films two or three times, by himself, and then he alters the drawings in question, filming each alteration as he goes along. He alters the drawings, erases the images, but charcoal can never be entirely erased. He literally makes hundreds of modifications. A trace of soot is always left behind. Some of the remaining traces are incorporated into new images, others simply leave behind a ghostly trace or imprint. The drawings therefore, are layered and are sedimental or akin to a palimpsest. These drawings are reminiscent of memories, which are often mere traces of forgotten events, and are fragmentary and layered upon one another.

Kentridge has himself said of memory:

³³ The artist was kind enough to explain his artistic process, as well as provide a tour of his Houghton studio, to this researcher.

³⁴ This evidenced in two of Kentridge's films *Felix in Exile* and *WEIGHING ... and WANTING*. For instance, while Felix Teitlebaum sits mournfully and desolate in his hotel room, filled with anxiety, depression, melancholia and frustration. His hotel room is flooded with bright blue water and is named "ANXIETY".

³⁵ Cf. the following films *Johannesburg, 2nd Greatest City after Paris*; *Sobriety, Obesity & Growing Old*; *Felix in Exile* and *Stereoscope* for examples of such representation.

³⁶ Cf. the following films *Felix in Exile*; *WEIGHING ... and WANTING* and *History of the Main Complaint* as evidence of this observation. For instance, dead bodies are outlined in red pastel; bullet wounds are emphasised with a cross in red pastel.

The difficulty in holding onto passions, impressions, ways of seeing things, the way that things that seem so indelibly imprinted on our memories still fade and become elusive (cited in Boris 2001:31; cf: Kentridge in Christov-Bakargiev 1998:96).

It is this very ephemeral nature of memory that inspired Kentridge to an art form that is persistently and relentlessly in motion — moving art (cf. Boris 2001:31). Thus Kentridge's artistic technique of drawing in charcoal has inherent tensions within it — between drawing and erasure; memory and amnesia; remembering and forgetting. Art curator Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev pontificates that Kentridge's

process of re-drawing and erasure means that each drawing is poised in a state of uncertainty. Each stage of the drawing carries with it the visual memory of its recent past.... This suggests a view of knowledge as constantly negotiated between present and memory, as if forgetting and remembering were not distinct moments, but overlapping (1999:34).

Through these erasures which leave elusive traces of absence, Kentridge ratifies the processes of forgetting, by effacing, and remembering, by drawing and redrawing. The traces that are left are, according to Kentridge, "evidence of some disturbance" — every stage of the drawing conveys with it the visual memory of its recent past. This is akin to Sigmund Freud's conceptualisations of memory which he explicates in his *A Note upon the Mystic Writing Pad* (1899a / 1984) which *Chapter Eight* deals with in great depth. Interestingly, Kentridge did not at first accept his inability to completely erase his charcoal strokes. He has often described his initial frustrations at not being able to eradicate the charcoal traces, describing it thus:

When I started doing animation, it was a real problem that I couldn't erase images perfectly. I tried every kind of eraser to make the charcoal drawing disappear completely ... it was only ages later that I understood they were vital (cited in Enright and Kentridge 2002:27).

The making of a film could involve a drawing of a particular scene which would be filmed up to 500 times, prompting Kentridge to describe the process as “stone-age filmmaking” (cited in Boris 2001:32)³⁷. If a scene changes, he starts with a new drawing and the process begins all over again. However, only twenty still lifes³⁸ might be left over from a film that is about eight minutes long, and he can take up to two years to complete the process. When his film is complete he works with an editor, such as Angus Gibson, or Cathy Myberg, to produce the final cut. During this process he will, for example, add accompanying music, normally the evocative and haunting music of Philip Miller.

The importance of noting Kentridge’s artistic animation style is unequivocally critical to understanding the films themselves as it reveals how his work is said to represent memory or memories, metaphorically speaking of course³⁹:

From the material process of animation — producing a moving image through a succession of drawings — Kentridge derives a metaphor, simultaneously slippery and incisive, for the processes of memory, insight and evasion (Gunning 2001:65).

However, not only do his works represent memories, but with their cultural, historical and political themes they are also a testament against forgetting one’s past.

Kentridge stated in 1992:

³⁷ The documentary video *Drawing the Passing* (1999b), records this entire process as the artist works on his film *Stereoscope*.

³⁸ This differs from cell animation, whereby thousands of cells remain at the end of the celluloid, or traditional cell animation process (Preston 1994).

³⁹ Cf. Alemani 2006; Benezra 2001; Boris 2001; Cameron 2001; Christov-Bakargiev 1998 and 1999; Coetzee 1999; Coetzee 2001; Cooke 2001; Dubrow and Rosengarten 2004; Enwezor 1998; Enwezor 2007; Godby 1992; Kentridge 1999b, 2001, 2006a, 2006b, 2006c, 2006d, 2007a, 2007b, 2007c; Krut 2006; Law-Viljoen 2007a, 2007b, 2007c; Oppelt 1999; Sitas 2001; Stewart 2006; Stone 2003; Taylor 2008; Wegener 2006; Wilson 2006.

I have never tried to make illustrations of apartheid, but the drawings and films are certainly spawned by and feed off the brutalized society left in its wake. I am interested in a political art, that is to say an art of ambiguity, contradiction, uncompleted gestures and uncertain endings. An art (and a politics) in which optimism is kept in check and nihilism at bay (cited in Godby 1992: unpaginated).

Kentridge wants to erect “a beacon against the process of forgetting the routes of our recent past” (cited in Boris 2001:33; Christov-Bakargiev 1998:97). He also advocates what Staci Boris defines as “healing through remembering” (Boris 2001:33). Kentridge further stated that his metaphor of drawing is “a multi-layered highway of consciousness, where one lane has one thought but driving up behind and overtaking it is a completely different thought” (1999:415). He has also philosophised that “the activity of drawing is a way of trying to understand who we are or how we operate in the world” (1999:419). Having discussed his artistic technique the focus now turns to the narrative and stories of the nine films at the centre of this study.

2.1.5 The nine films in the Drawings for Projection⁴⁰ series

The art books also include detailed descriptions of the films in question. The descriptions usually differ in length, depending on the size and length of the books, as well as the time of printing. So for example, author Michael Godby in his book *Drawings for Projection* provides a very detailed description of Kentridge’s works, but as the book was written and printed in 1992, Godby only focused on the films that had been released up until that time: the first four films in the series. However,

⁴⁰ To reiterate, all the films, and copyright, are provided by very kind courtesy of the artist, William Kentridge (PhD).

rather than rely on the different authors and their descriptions of the films, what follows is a transcription of the films based on several viewings by this researcher, summarised as part of the methodological process.

There are initially two central characters in this filmic series — Soho Eckstein and Felix Teitlebaum — then they merge into one (referred to as Soho/Felix in this thesis). Soho Eckstein is identifiable by his pin-striped suit and cigar, whilst Felix Teitlebaum is always represented naked. Soho Eckstein is at first represented as an un-empathetic character, an industrialist, a negligent husband, a mining magnate and exploiter of his workers. Felix Teitlebaum on the other hand has an innocent aura about him, a dreamer, who constantly fantasises about Mrs. Eckstein. His nakedness implies vulnerability, and in *Felix in Exile* he is depicted as desolate and melancholic. Finally the two characters merge into one in the film *History of the Main Complaint*. The individual that is the result of this collusion has the more distinct appearance and likeness of Kentridge himself. The character retains the capitalist, or executive-type pin-stripe suit, which is particularly ironic in the poignant scenes of Soho/Felix on the beach in the film *Tide Table* — this also references Kentridge's earlier statement made in 1998 about how his character is a "displaced self-portrait" (Kentridge cited in Christov-Bakargiev 1998:13). Eckstein's suit and resemblance to Kentridge make him easily identifiable, and he retains some of the innocence of Felix Teitlebaum, and a sense of responsibility and guilt that come into play in the conscious and unconscious being that is Soho/Felix (themes most prevalent in the film, *History of the Main Complaint*). The merging of the two characters sees a more self-reflexive individual, who as time passes confronts his past choices and decisions, and his responsibilities, and deals with feelings of guilt and remorse.

A brief synopsis of each film follows:

Johannesburg, 2nd Greatest City after Paris (1990): Kentridge introduces the audience to three central characters: Soho Eckstein, Felix Teitlebaum and Mrs. Eckstein. Soho Eckstein is represented as a capitalist, a mining magnate, dressed in a pin-stripe suit and an ever-present cigar. He is also depicted as gluttonous and unempathetic and exploitative of his workers. His wife, Mrs. Eckstein, is a neglected wife, and coveted by Felix Teitlebaum, who is always represented as naked. He seems to represent the proletariat, the subaltern, or the innocent; although he is at first elusive and enigmatic it is very apparent that he is the exact opposite of Soho Eckstein. The film focuses on Soho Eckstein and his grand empire, which includes him buying up half of Johannesburg, the setting of all nine films. While Soho Eckstein focuses on his capitalist exploits, Felix Teitlebaum initially fantasises about having an affair with Mrs. Eckstein. The film includes a fight between Soho Eckstein and Felix Teitlebaum, with a victorious Felix Teitlebaum. The film also includes scenes of Soho Eckstein feeding the poor, presumably his mine workers, but the food that he literally throws at them also obliterates them from the scene, erasing their existence. Soho Eckstein is drawn with an obese face, which is in sharp contrast to the lined, painfully thin faces of the poor.

In *Monument* (1990), Soho Eckstein is depicted as a great philanthropist. He unveils a monument, supposedly erected to his workers, with great fanfare, and much grandeur. The monument, which is formed from the words of Soho's presentation at the unveiling, is unexpectedly a sculpture of a character named "Harry", based on a hobo that the artist had encountered many times living on the streets. "Harry the Hobo" is pinioned to the base of the monument, and he is overly burdened by a huge mass of rock on his back. A close-up focuses on the face of Harry, only to have him

open his eyes — the “statue” is alive, the close-up fades to the sound of his extremely laboured and painful breathing.

Mine (1991): this film follows on from *Monument* and is a horrifying view of the miners working underground in the goldmines, owned and excavated by Soho Eckstein. Soho Eckstein, still wearing his pin-stripe suit is shown to be seated behind his office desk, which then turns into a bed. His bed serves as his desk, which is littered with office machinery including a ticker-tape machine that spews out ticker-tape and a Nigerian head. Soho Eckstein presses his coffee plunger, which turns into a lift shaft that then continues to tunnel into a dormitory filled with bunks and bodiless heads. This is intercut with shots of miners working in the mines drilling in the rockface; the plunger continues until it turns into a transatlantic slave ship. The association is clear – the miners are no more than badly paid slaves living and working in abominable conditions. The lift returns, but with a gift, a tiny rhinoceros. Soho Eckstein, with one sweep of an arm, clears his desk or bed, of all his office machinery and men that have been spewed out of the ticker-tape machine, so that he can play with his new acquisition, a tiny rhinoceros. The scene ends with the desk becoming a big luxurious bed again where he plays leisurely with his new pet.

Sobriety, Obesity & Growing Old (1991) reintroduces both Mrs. Eckstein and Felix Teitlebaum, who is now her lover. There are opening scenes of (a still naked) Felix Teitlebaum sitting in a vast, empty landscape. In opposition, Soho Eckstein, whose building empire keeps growing and expanding is featured sitting at his desk surveying his empire. He is then shown alone in his bed, with a caption ‘Soho Abandoned’, a reference to his wife’s affair with Felix Teitlebaum. A street protest is portrayed, watched by the lovers, and graphic love-making scenes are depicted, rather surrealistically in a photograph frame which sits on Soho Eckstein’s office

desk. The love-making scenes emit a flood of water which in turn floods Soho Eckstein's office and building empire, destroying the office blocks, including Soho Eckstein's headquarters. Soho Eckstein is left alone with his cat in an empty landscape, with the inscription "Her Absence filled the World"; he picks up his cat, which transforms into a bullhorn that booms out "Come Home". The message continues, as days turn into nights; through the vast landscape and into Felix Teitlebaum's territory. Felix Teitlebaum retreats to his forlorn landscape while Mrs. Eckstein and Soho Eckstein are shown together, with a halo of water growing around them while marchers move along the horizon.

Felix in Exile (1994), the fifth film in the series, chronicles the story of Felix Teitlebaum, and Soho Eckstein and Mrs. Eckstein are erased temporarily. This film also begins with a forsaken landscape, littered with mining and industrial debris. It then cuts to a scene of a woman, "Nandi", who, with the aid of a theodolite, is surveying the landscape. She is drawing, or documenting, the landscape where a brutal atrocity has occurred; she tries to draw what she sees before the bodies are reabsorbed into the land. Felix Teitlebaum is depicted in a rather depressing hotel room, which contains a suitcase of Nandi's drawings that he is looking at. As Nandi draws, dead, dying and wounded bodies emerge. Their wounds bleed into the ground. While Felix Teitlebaum is not there to personally witness what Nandi is witnessing, through her eyes, her drawings, her testimony, he "sees" the protesters, the dead, the wounded, the bleeding, suppurating bodies, which are then absorbed into the landscape, completely disappearing. Nandi's drawings fly out of the suitcase and cover the hotel walls, creating an interior landscape in the room. Newspapers cover the bodies and they then too turn into drawings, and also plaster the hotel walls. There is a close-up of Felix Teitlebaum shaving, the mirror dissolves and he

finds not his own reflection in the mirror but Nandi's. The mirror fills up with water which then floods his room. Nandi then looks at Felix through a double-ended telescope; they then embrace in a pool of water; as she bathes she is shot and becomes yet another body appropriated by the landscape, just as the earlier bodies she had drawn became embedded in the landscape. In the meanwhile, Felix Teitlebaum is left alone and melancholic in his hotel room, watching, both impotent and seemingly imprisoned. As the room fills with water the drawings continue to peel off the walls into the water and Felix Teitlebaum is left alone and despondent. The film fades with Felix Teitlebaum looking towards the barren landscape bereft of any bodies, and all traces of a massacre have been completely erased.

History of the Main Complaint (1996) sees the morphing of the characters Soho Eckstein and Felix Teitlebaum (henceforth referred to as Soho/Felix so as to distinguish from the previous versions of the formally disparate personae). Soho Eckstein's characteristic pin-stripe suit is still apparent, but prior to this morphing of the two characters; Soho Eckstein had been drawn in a very indistinct manner, with a rather messy technique and ill-defined and rough facial features. Felix Teitlebaum was depicted more distinctly and definitely more clearly so as to resemble the artist himself, who has clearly stated that both characters are alter-egos for himself.⁴¹ Soho/Felix clearly keeps the outer appearance of Soho Eckstein, but his facial features are in the exact likeness of Felix Teitlebaum and of course, the artist himself. The film begins with a shot of an empty city street, in stark comparison to previously portrayed streets filled with protesters. It has the tense atmosphere of a significant aftermath. The film then cuts to a hospital ward where Soho/Felix is lying in a coma behind a hospital curtain. He is wearing a respiratory mask and

⁴¹ Kentridge cited in Christov-Bakargiev 1998:13; cf. point 2.1.1 above.

surrounded by medical machinery. A doctor uses a stethoscope to check Soho/Felix's body and drawings of X-Rays appear as the sensor penetrates deep into his body; X-Rays not only of his bones but also office equipment that forms a montage with his physical innards. Many more doctors surround Soho/Felix and all are identical versions of himself (and of the artist). On the screen of a sonar machine a scene of the outside world appears, with Soho/Felix looking through the windscreen of a moving car. Other images appear — telephones and typewriters — emblems of his previous corporate life. His past is appearing in his present. The scenes then form a montage, with the use of jump-cuts from one scene to another from his hospital bed to his driving outside. He keeps looking into his rear view mirror. His bodily tests run parallel to his memories of brutal attacks on black South Africans — horrific images of men beating another man feature. Soho/Felix then remembers an accident where he hit a man on the road while driving. His remembering awakens him from his coma and he can no longer lie there as an unengaged, unresponsive witness of events. The white curtain opens and we then see him at his desk. The question that is raised is whether or not Soho/Felix has made any moral progress. Does he feel any guilt at the past apartheid atrocities? The audience is left wondering whether or not his memory and recognition of things past has changed anything or whether it is simply business as usual?⁴²

⁴² This film coincided with the establishment of South Africa's *Truth and Reconciliation Commission* which was formed to hear testimony from both perpetrators and victims for the purposes of retrieving lost stories and histories, bearing witness to atrocities, making reparation for those who had suffered and providing amnesty for the perpetrators of the atrocities of apartheid and South Africa's civil war. The emphasis was on reconciliation and to provide a new context of forgiveness in a post-apartheid and post-colonial era. Please see *Terminological Synopsis of Concepts* for more details.

With *WEIGHING ... and WANTING* (1998),⁴³ the film's narrative begins with a close-up of a white, blue-rimmed tea cup and matching saucer. A scene then emerges to reveal a living room, complete with a fire-place and a vase full of fresh flowers. Although the room is empty, pieces of random papers are found on the table, while a word, "WEIGHING", is spelt out on the wall, followed by the words "and WANTING". A large rock appears on the landscape, which resembles a brain; and a CAT scan, an image which is from the last film and is included here. The CAT scan resembles a crematorium oven from one of the death camps, which is possibly an indirect reference to the Holocaust. Soho/Felix enters the CAT scan and his brain is "excavated", revealing layers of his brain, some with images of a mine, a reference to his previous life as an exploitative capitalist. The scene ends abruptly, reverting to another landscape; this time however, instead of being a barren wasteland there are tall trees and they protect a house. Soho/Felix is seen walking towards the house; he stops and picks up a stone. A jump-cut takes us inside the house where Soho/Felix is sitting inspecting the stone. There are scales and loose papers on the table where he sits. The film then shows different views of the world and fragments of the past inside the stone. Soho/Felix then tenderly embraces a naked, thin woman wearing glasses.⁴⁴ Afterwards, the film reverts to its focus on the large rock in the landscape. Soho/Felix is also seen listening to the teacup, holding it close to his ear, as if it were a sea shell. The image of the naked woman is erased and the remnants from her body morph into a steel framework. Soho/Felix places his head in her lap, but she

⁴³ This film continues chronicling the life of Soho/Felix, but it is a film that is clearly made post-apartheid and is clearly separate from the depiction of the incidents of protesting, rioting, and violence experienced during apartheid. Following on from *History of the Main Complaint*, this film is centred on reconciliation and memory, a mirror reflection of South Africa during that era.

⁴⁴ This woman is drawn in the likeness of William Kentridge's wife, Anne Stanwix, whom this researcher has had the opportunity to meet briefly.

morphs into a telephone. Several brief scenes of domestic conflict appear. She is shown beating him, and the tea cup shatters. The ensuing chaos and violence is represented by black charcoal marks and red pastel slashes as well as torn pieces of paper. Soho/Felix is then shown completely alone in his home. The woman emerges from the rock on the landscape. He is shown listening to her, they meet again and the torn fragments of paper are united. The camera then reveals the rock, complete again. There is a room with a basin of water on the table and the re-joined pieces of paper are seen to completely disappear. Soho/Felix's head rests on the rock outside. The audience is left with a question — was this a dream, was he just sleeping?

Stereoscope (1999) sees the continuation of the central character Soho/Felix; this time the screen and images are split into two. They are seemingly identical to each other, but of course are not. The central story however is on the city in chaos — uprisings, violence, beatings, destruction of shops and the city centre. The city is presented as bustling and alive, with telephone wires and poles, power stations and a telephone switchboard. These images of a city in chaos are juxtaposed with domestic or work scenarios where Soho/Felix is shown in his office or home, often looking pensive and melancholic. There are images that he incorporates from previous films, such as a room filling with water as with *Felix in Exile*, and the character “Nandi” reappears. There is also the ever-present cat, which as with earlier films, turns into different objects, such as a toaster, a telephone and a bomb. The film ends with the flashing words ‘GIVE’ and then ‘FORGIVE’.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ In his *Round Table* discussion Kentridge states that he attended Jacques Derrida's lecture on forgiveness, in Johannesburg in 2002:

Derrida who came and gave a lecture at that time which I could not understand but he said that the word give has an interesting etymology, that the word comes from the Germanic root *gif* and knowing from Afrikaans, I don't know German but from Afrikaans the word *gif* means poison ... there is a poison in the giving. And that acts of giving are acts of aggression and

Tide Table (2003) is the last film to be made by Kentridge for this series. It opens with Soho/Felix, in pin-stripe suit, sitting on a beach in an old-fashioned deck chair⁴⁶. Waves swell in the sea, then retreat; a shore line advances, then retreats. It is an almost utopian image. He watches a boy playing on the sand. It is not clear if the child is his own, or a grandchild, or possibly, it might be a recollection from his own childhood. The child throws stones into the waves, climbs over rocks, builds sand castles in the likeness of hotels and bathes in a pool of sea water. Soho/Felix watches a religious baptism take place in the waves; he reads a newspaper which shows stocks rise and fall; there are cows present, fat and lean, some stray into the sea; there is a bathing booth filled with deck chairs that morphs into a slaughterhouse, then a death camp, and lastly, a hospital filled with sick ailing bodies. Simultaneously, three military generals watch Soho/Felix from a hotel balcony with binoculars. All the while a black South African woman watches both the boy as well as the sometimes dozing Soho/Felix. The film ends with the boy on the beach and Soho/Felix having exchanged places at the shoreline, with Soho/Felix throwing stones into the waves.

The descriptions of these films are significant as they chronicle the narrative and the main events of the characters. The descriptions are also important to include here as Kentridge's films are not that accessible for general viewing, and while they cannot in

that the idea of forgiveness becomes very complicated (Kentridge, Rinder, Rosenthal and Silverman 2009).

Kentridge therefore uses these words in his film as a reference to Derrida's lecture and his understanding that to give can poison one. This is a possible questioning of the call for forgiveness by the TRC.

⁴⁶ In an interview with Claire Wegener William Kentridge states that his character Soho/Felix is on holiday in Muizenburg, Cape Town (2006:271).

any way substitute for watching the films themselves, they do at least provide an overview of their content and stories.

2.1.6 A discussion of the themes and motifs found in Kentridge's films

Kentridge's films are not just about historical events that occurred during apartheid, they are about themes and concerns that relate to apartheid and other atrocities and wars, such as identity, guilt, memory, forgiveness and reconciliation. The latter films specifically focus on Soho/Felix's constant struggle for forgiveness and his remorse. Other themes however, deal with the more intimate experiences of his characters. For example, Felix Teitlebaum's personal interaction with the character Nandi, the sexual relationship that Felix Teitlebaum has with Mrs. Eckstein; the inclusion of his own wife, Anne Stanwix; domestic scenes in a home with a fireplace and having tea; walking up his garden pathway to his home. Kentridge expressed it succinctly and insightfully when he stated in an interview with Claire Wegener in 2006:

All the films I've made I'd say are not documentary. They are not documenting what happened here, but they're trying to make some kind of map of how what happened here impacts in one's head, which is not the same thing. ... my other long-term project is to consider how we become who we are, what agency we have in the construction of ourselves, what things have an effect, how strong those effects are, how long memories are retained, how long strong compassion can be maintained. All of those things are questions that interest me (2006:272).

There are also many diverse, but recurring motifs found in his filmic series. These include: cats and rhinoceroses; landscapes — urban and rural; water; disused machinery and industrial waste; pollution of land and water; old fashioned telephones (known as "bakelites") and typewriters; eyes; mirrors; tea-cups and other household items such as beds, and fireplaces; medical equipment such as X-Rays

and CAT scans. Two stylistic motifs include the use of red and / or blue pastel. This is mentioned above in point 2.1.4 which details Kentridge's artistic *oeuvre*. Thus, many of the motifs found in his films relate to the individual, such as domestic scenes, as well as the collective, such as rioters, miners and protesters.

To conclude this section of Chapter Two it is imperative to note that this thesis is greatly indebted to these foundational works and to Kentridge's own elucidations of his works.

2.2 Part II: Scholarly works on Kentridge

Part II of this chapter focuses on the scholarly research about Kentridge's works, which includes post-graduate studies as well as other academic literature. A brief overview of these studies and articles is proffered here. *Broken Vessels: The Impossibility of the Art of Remembrance and Re-collection in the work of Anselm Kiefer, Christian Boltanski, William Kentridge and Santu Mofokeng* (2001), is an MA thesis written by Dina Zoe Belluigi. This study focuses on two of Kentridge's films from the *Drawings for Projection* series, namely *Felix in Exile* (1994) and *History of the Main Complaint* (1996). Her theoretical framework centres on the works of Walter Benjamin, Jacques Derrida, and Jean-Francois Lyotard and the role of the historian and the artist in representing history. She also expressly focuses on the concept of melancholia in all four artists. Although she analyses these four artists she does not do a comparative analysis between them and they are analysed as separate entries / entities. Her analysis of Anselm Kiefer therefore is not duplicated in this dissertation. (Please see *Chapter Nine* for more details.) A PhD dissertation entitled *Melancholy Constellations: Walter Benjamin, Anselm Kiefer, William Kentridge and the Imaging of History as Catastrophe* is written by Gerhard Theodore

Schoeman. As with the previously mentioned MA thesis, he similarly focuses on melancholia and the representation of history and uses a theoretical framework based predominantly on Walter Benjamin and to a lesser degree Theodor Adorno. His analysis only focuses on one of the films from Kentridge's series: *Felix in Exile*. His study does overlap to some degree with the MA thesis written by Dina Zoe Belluigi. Another doctoral study that emphasises melancholy and mourning is Kristina Maria Ottolina Hagstrom's *Melancholy Traces: Performing the Art of Mourning*. Hagstrom presents three case studies: the testimonial writings of Auschwitz survivor Charlotte Delbo; William Kentridge's play and opera; and the public discourse surrounding the "honour killing" of Fadime Sahindal that took place in Sweden. With regard to Kentridge her chapter centres on his theatrical production *Black Box / Chambre Noir* and the accompanying opera *The Magic Flute*. Only passing references are made to his *Drawings for Projection* series, most specifically *History of the Main Complaint*. She focuses on the relationship between performance and mourning, or performance of melancholia. Her theoretical framework includes Judith Butler (performative art); Walter Benjamin, Theodor Adorno and Michel Foucault. While Hagstrom's chapter on Kentridge provides an absorbing and thorough historical overview and detailed analysis of *The Magic Flute* and colonial Enlightenment and colonialism her thesis is not pertinent to this study. A book by Jennifer Arlene Stone entitled *Freud's Body Ego or Memorabilia of Grief. Lucien Freud and William Kentridge*, was published in 2003. Stone is a practising psychoanalyst in New York and her work was a comparative analysis of the artists Lucien Freud and William Kentridge. The focus is also on melancholia and mourning as thematics inherent in both artists' works. Her theoretical framework is entirely

based upon that of Sigmund Freud and his work on melancholia and the body ego⁴⁷. Stone's work is referenced in *Chapter Five* of this thesis.

Healing Violence in South Africa: A Textual Reading of Kentridge's "Drawings for projection" (2005) is another PhD study on Kentridge by Vanessa Thompson. Her methodology is comprised of three main sections. The first is a humanist reading of Kentridge's films up to his eighth film in the series, *Stereoscope* (1999), based on the works of Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow. The second part of her methodology is a semiotic reading based solely on the work of Hugh J. Silverman's *Textualities: Between Hermeneutics & Deconstruction* (1994). This is an extremely brief chapter that does not really contribute to the elucidation of Kentridge's films at all. The last part of her study is comprised of a frame-by-frame transcription of all eight films in Kentridge's series. Her research is not at all relevant to this thesis.

A very interesting doctoral study was completed by Sara Matthews (2008) titled: *A Pedagogy of Implication: Witnessing Historical Trauma as a Question of Learning*. Her study focuses on the teacher's testimony to the pedagogy or teaching of trauma. In other words, how does one teach traumatic events, especially those relating to civil war(s)? What effect does it have on the teacher and their learners? Matthews flew to South Africa and conducted interviews with teachers. She suggests that one way to teach and engage with the pedagogy of traumatic events is to convey or teach them through creativity or artists' work. It is in this capacity that she refers to

⁴⁷ Please see Freud's: *Mourning and Melancholia* (1917 / 1957); *Sigmund Freud: on Murder, Mourning and Melancholia* (2005); and *The Ego and the Id* (1923 / 1961).

Kentridge's work as an example of teaching trauma through art (she also uses John Keats as an example). She references Kentridge's still lifes and film *Ubu Tells the Truth*; as well as his films *Johannesburg, 2nd Greatest City after Paris*, *Sobriety*, *Obesity & Growing Old* and *Stereoscope*. Her theoretical foundation is based on the theories of pedagogy such as those of Deborah Britzman and Donald Meltzer. The former academic's field of expertise is psychology and education and teaching what she terms as "studies in difficult knowledge" and "studies of the emotional world" (cited in Matthews 2008:4-8). The latter academic, Donald Meltzer's field of expertise is Kleinian psychoanalysis, based on the work of Melanie Klein. While Matthews' thesis is not germane to this study, the results from her interviews and her unusual stance on how to teach the traumata of history were most thought-provoking and very well argued.

Arlene Murphy completed an MA report as part of a coursework MA that was entitled the *Use of Medical Imagery in Hand Drawn Animation Artworks: William Kentridge's "History of the Main Complaint" and Other Works* (2008). Her focus is on Kentridge's animated films *History of the Main Complaint* and *WEIGHING ... and WANTING* as well as her own artistic work in the mediums of stop-frame animation, painting and printmaking. Her report examines how Kentridge, as well as herself, use medical imagery in their works as a means to narrate the self. Her theoretical focus is on Lisa Cartwright's book *Screening the Body: Tracing Medicine's Visual Culture* (1995); Barry Saunter's *CT Suite: The work of Diagnosis in the Age of Non Invasive Cutting* (2008); and, Kathleen Adler and Marcia Pointon's *The Body Imaged: the Human Form and Visual Culture since the Renaissance* (1993). Andrew Joseph Hennlich completed his doctoral research, *(un)Fixing the eye: William Kentridge and*

the Optics of Witness in 2010. He clearly states that his central line of inquiry into Kentridge's works is comprised of how the artist uses "optical toys" as metaphors in his artworks (2011:12). He has selected the following artworks for his analysis: *Ubu Tells the Truth* (camera); *Felix in Exile* (theodolite); *History of the Main Complaint* (medical imaging devices); and lastly *Black Box / Chamber Noir* (camera). His literature review for a reading of the complex narratives of history and apartheid consists of a central key text, Antjie Krog's *Country of my Skull: Guilt, Sorrow, and the Limits of Forgiveness in the New South Africa*, published in 1998 (2011:27). Other texts include the works of Melanie Klein and Jonathan Carey respectively. The latter author deals with the problematics of visual modernism and social modernity and looks at the significance of physiological optics. The film *Felix in Exile* is the focus of chapter two which interestingly includes a comparative analysis between Kentridge's work and the South African artist J. H. Pierneef. In Chapter Three of his thesis, which in his introduction he states deals predominantly with Kentridge's film *History of the Main Complaint*, Hennlich makes constant reference to another of Kentridge's films in the *Drawings for projection* series: *WEIGHING ... and WANTING*. He also references two main sources: Lisa Cartwright's book *Screening the Body: Tracing Medicine's Visual Culture* (1995); and Barry Saunder's *CT Suite: The work of Diagnosis in the Age of Non Invasive Cutting* (2008). The reason for highlighting his two central sources is that this chapter is very similar to Arlene Murphey's MA study, which preceded Hennlich's dissertation by two years. The overlap is quite considerable in places.

Leora Ruth Maltz completed her doctoral dissertation for the discipline of art and architecture in 2008. Her dissertation is titled: *William Kentridge: Process as*

Metaphor and Other Doubtful Enterprises. This is another fascinating analysis of Kentridge's *oeuvre*. It is entirely focused on Kentridge's artistic or stylistic aesthetic process: the act of drawing. It is based on the theories surrounding the concept of metaphysics and change founded on the philosophical works of Alfred North Whitehead, Charles Hartshorne, Nicholas Rescher and Henri Bergson. This metaphysical philosophy is termed "process philosophy" and defines reality as a process. Her argument is that through his act of drawing Kentridge links it to the real world beyond the drawing. She also includes film maker George Meliès⁴⁸, dramaturge Samuel Beckett and artist George Brecht⁴⁹ as part of her methodology. Other theories that form part of her methodology are John Dewy's aesthetics of action; Hannah Arendt's ethics of action; Harold Rosenberg's writings on process; and Marxist theories of history. Much of her dissertation focuses on Kentridge's very early works, such as his performance, direction and artworks in the Junction Avenue Theatre production of plays. Her work is ultimately indebted to an article on Kentridge by academic Rosalind Krauss published in 2001 (this article is mentioned further on in this thesis). However, her emphasis is on Kentridge's process as it fits into post-war discourses of American art.

Several scholars have also written articles on Kentridge's cinematic project. Rosalind Krauss in her article: *The Rock: William Kentridge's "Drawings for Projection"* (2001) was the first to emphasise the significance of Kentridge's aesthetic act or process in drawing his art. As already mentioned, Leora Ruth Maltz has used that article as the basis for her doctoral research (2008). Tom Gunning, a professor in the Department of Art History at the University of Chicago, wrote an

⁴⁸ A French illusionist, born 1861, died 1938.

⁴⁹ A conceptual artist, born 1926, died 2008; he was also a composer and chemist, and a creator of participatory art.

article on the film *Stereoscope: Doubled Vision peering through Kentridge's "Stereoscope"* (2001). He too focusses on the process of the medium of animation as "invented"⁵⁰ by Kentridge (2001:66). He attempts to decipher the erasures and the spaces between the drawings. He suggests that Kentridge's films raise more questions than answers and concludes that "the animation of this world [the violent city of Johannesburg as depicted in *Stereoscope*] seems demonic, with the only solution (perhaps) being that of complete erasure" (2001:73; parenthesis — author of this dissertation). Susan Stewart, a poet and critic, wrote an intriguing article on Kentridge's works, with reference to many of the different mediums he employs, simply titled *A Messenger*. In this article, Stewart argues that Kentridge, through his use of animation and fantasy-inspired content, suggests that there is a place for "fantasy in an art of public conscience" (2001:87). This is very similar to what academic and historian Hayden White (1996) argues, that is, that surrealism and fantasy can be used to re-represent historical events. *Chapter Eight* of this thesis, which deals with this line of enquiry, therefore sources Susan Stewart as support for Hayden White's discourse on historical re-representation as it applies to Kentridge's films. Susan Stewart also contributed an article to the book *William Kentridge: Prints* (2006), entitled *Resistance and Ground: the Prints of William Kentridge*. While the book does not deal with his filmic series, Stewart's insights on Kentridge's prints have been extrapolated from and linked to his films in *Chapter Nine* of this thesis.

In "*History of the Main Complaint*": *William Kentridge and the Making of Post-apartheid South Africa* (2004), academics Jessica Dubow and Ruth Rosengarten

⁵⁰ As with Krauss (2001), Gunning clearly states that while this process of animation as used by Kentridge is not entirely new, the way that Kentridge explores it and develops it is (2001:66).

situate Soho Eckstein's body as the locus and backdrop to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Several of their interpretative readings of Kentridge's film *History of the Main Complaint* are similar as those proffered in this dissertation and as such are mentioned and sourced in *Chapter Eight: Memory, History, Identity, Time and Space*. Jane Taylor, writer of the play, *Ubu and the Truth Commission* (1997), which was directed by Kentridge, has written two articles on Kentridge. The first article, *Spherical and without Exits: thoughts on William Kentridge's anamorphic film "What Will Come (Has already Come)"* (2008) only cursorily references Kentridge's *Drawings for Projection* series. The second article *Tide Tables Turned: Fathers and Sons in William Kentridge* (2009), concerns itself with the last film in Kentridge's series: *Tide Table*. Taylor gives a particularly intriguing textual reading of the film: she proffers that this film of Kentridge's deals with a sub-text: the post-apartheid problem of Aids in South Africa. While this is most fascinating her interpretation is not at all relevant to this dissertation.

In summation of this section, there are many other articles and scholastic studies on Kentridge's work, but they do not concern themselves with his *Drawings for Projection* series. With regard to the studies and academic articles discussed here, they generally fall outside the purview of this dissertation.

2.3 Conclusion

To conclude then, while many of these analyses, including both the foundational and the scholastic works on Kentridge, have become virtual truisms, the fundamental

questions subtending these critiques and observations, that is, *why* and *how* Kentridge engages with and depicts memory /memories) remain unasked and unanswered, until now. This thesis therefore opens up a new avenue of interpretation, focusing on the series that inaugurated Kentridge's double-enacted aesthetic operation of inscription and erasure and provides a theoretical framework never before considered.

CHAPTER THREE: LITERATURE REVIEW: THEORETICAL (PART II)

The chapter provides an overview, critique and substantiation of the relevant seminal works required for the analysis of the topic. Furthermore, it contextualises the investigation within previous, related research and therefore also provides supporting theory (i.e. secondary sources). As with all literature reviews, the seminal and ancillary theoretical works designated also clearly demarcate the boundaries of knowledge relating to this study, as obviously not all research can be included. As mentioned in *Chapter One* (and *Chapter Four: A Methodology of Memory*, which explains the qualitative process that resulted in this choice) the literature selected is extremely eclectic, as dictated by the themes and the sensitised concepts initially identified in Kentridge's films. Also, as elucidated on in *Chapter Four*, the perspectives selected in order to explicate Kentridge's films started with a very simple premise, the researcher's own world-view: a repudiation of grand narratives; an abjuration of any absolute / one "truth"; and an incredulity of "objectivity". The five broad themes covered in this chapter are: psychoanalysis; post-structuralism; postmodernism; memory studies; and, trauma studies.

3.1 Psychoanalysis and Sigmund Freud

Sigmund Freud is the founding father of psychoanalysis. While Sigmund Freud's works have been celebrated or denigrated, refuted or practised, he has undeniably had an influential impact as a major historical figure in the Western world. His works have introduced such concepts as "the Unconscious"; "penis envy"; the "Oedipus Complex"; "psychoanalysis"; "psychic trauma"; and the "talking cure", to mention a few. Countless books, articles, theories, and curricula have been generated

discussing his works, either disparagingly or positively. Ultimately though, Freud generated a unique form of discourse which is either used as a psychotherapeutic practice or as a critical method of analysis / critique for analysing history; narratives; media and literary texts; culture; and politics (Forrester 1990; Payne 2005).

Sigmund Freud created psychoanalysis as “a procedure for the medical treatment of neurotic patients” (1915 / 1991a:39). At the basis, or creation of every self, lies psychological trauma, usually traced to some infantile experience. Freud’s theory was at first known as a theory of “hysteria” simply because the psychiatric work that he was doing involved his female patients whose symptomology he diagnosed as “hysteria”. He then concluded that these symptoms could be traced back to some form of childhood abuse that had been forgotten and repressed in their unconscious minds. They then resurfaced and presented themselves as “hysteria”. He published his findings in 1896, entitled: *The Aetiology of Hysteria*. He also argued that women were in some way responsible for their own sexual abuse. As his work progressed, he dismissed that argument and instead introduced the Oedipus Complex, based entirely on the myth of *Oedipus Rex*¹. Freud only returned to his concept of psychological trauma (“*trauerarbeit*”^{2 3}) after he began treating shell-shocked soldiers

¹ *Oedipus Rex* is a tragedy by the Greek playwright Sophocles. Due to an oracle, Oedipus fled the house of his (adoptive) parents and thus encountered his biological parents, unwittingly murdering his father, King Laius, and committing incest with his mother, Jocasta. The prophecy foretold by the oracle was fulfilled. When Oedipus realised his sin, he punished himself by gouging out his eyes. Although Sigmund Freud, who first analysed the myth, recognised that the story of Oedipus Rex was a Greek myth, he also saw this tragedy as a symbolic description of man’s greatest psychological conflicts (this myth is the basis for Freud’s concept of men’s “Oedipal Complex” first introduced in his work *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900 / 1991a); the corresponding complex in women is called the “Electra Complex”). In effect, the myth represents every child’s unconscious desire to possess the opposite-sexed parent and simultaneously dispose of the same-sexed parent (Freud 1991a).

² Freud coined this term “*trauerarbeit*” or “psychic trauma”.

returning from the First World War. Ultimately, in the psychoanalytic account the individual subject is formed in the face of trauma or as a result of trauma. In order to understand how such trauma is initially repressed or denied Freud introduced several seminal concepts to further his, and our, understanding of trauma. He argued that emotions, thoughts and desires are mental, and are known consciously. However, the self has unconscious components too, which he said included “instinctual impulses ... [which] can only be described as sexual” (1982:47). He saw psychoanalysis as a means of delving into the unconscious in order to trace desire, wish fulfilment and the residues of trauma. He defined the process thus: “to make mysteries and fish in troubled waters,” where the psychoanalyst finds the self in a constant struggle between “the pressure of the exigencies of life” and “the satisfaction of the instincts” (1982:46-47). For Freud this meant an intensive reading of the hidden strata of the stories told by his patients. He employed several methods as techniques to achieve this underside or the buried layers, which included “the talking cure” or “free association”: the patient talks at will in consultation with the psychoanalyst about intimate subjects, subjects so sensitive that the patient normally conceals them from the outside world. He used a form of free association as well as analysing the contents of a patient’s dreams, which he felt contained the residues of the unconscious mind. He argued that “chance and symptomatic actions” had to be understood as “valid psychical acts”. One such act would be that of “forgetting” which uses absent-mindedness as a device for secreting data. For Freud “forgetting” was the “intention to avoid unpleasure” (1982:52, 88, 87, 100-103). This notion of avoidance became the purpose of looking for structured absences that are

³ Cathy Caruth defined trauma in her book, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History*, as “an overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events in which the response to the event [is] ... often delayed, uncontrolled [and] repetitive” (1996:11). It is overwhelming because it is unprecedented.

founded on displacement, denial and over-determination. The central idea behind this is that an individual's psyche denies stress and displaces it onto something else, which gives credence to the psychoanalytic premise as a theory of conflict. Freud writes: "the ideas which people try to suppress in this way turn out invariably to be the most important ones" (1982:52). Freud also introduced the concept of "scopophilia" or simply "the pleasure in looking" (1982:65). Freud argued that sexual life is characterised by the "desire to look at the other person or to feel him or to watch him in the performance of his intimate actions" (1982:258, 347, 371, and 364). This concept was later adopted and expounded on by Laura Mulvey and Jean-Paul Sartre. (These ideas are central to studying Kentridge's films and are elucidated on in *Chapter Seven*.) Psychoanalysis as a therapeutic theory is simply an individual's psychic struggle to overcome trauma and form an integrated self. These psychic struggles are fought in the realm of the unconscious, which means that they cannot be known or thought of in the conscious realm or neurons of individuals.

Freud used archaeology⁴ as a recurrent analogy for exhuming psychical processes and buried impulses, wishes, desires and trauma. Understanding the unconscious as a (metaphoric) archaeological excavation site uncovering the unconscious and repressed impulses and memories is fundamental to comprehending repressed trauma as related to Kentridge's works. Freud considered the psychoanalyst's role to be the excavation of the analysand's unconscious. And many theorists have

⁴ Imagine that an explorer arrives in a little-known region where his interest is aroused by an expanse of ruins, with remains of walls, fragments of columns, and tablets with half effaced and unreadable inscriptions. ... he may start upon the ruins, clear away the rubbish, and, beginning from the visible remains, uncover what is buried. If his work is crowned with success, the discoveries are self-explanatory ... the fragments of columns can be filled out into a temple; the numerous inscriptions, which, by good luck, may be bilingual, reveal an alphabet and a language, and when they have been deciphered and translated, yield undreamed-of information about the events of the remote past, to commemorate which the monuments were built (Freud 2001 / 1896:192).

argued that this archaeological exhuming of an unconscious is not limited to the excavation of an individual's psyche but that of history's psyche too (Harvey 2007; Irigaray 1985 / 1977). French feminist philosopher Luce Irigaray, while accusing Freud of disregarding and neglecting history, took it upon herself to appropriate Freud's idea and protract his concept of the unconscious beyond the constraints of the individual's psyche to comprehend a culture that is as resounding with memory as childhood is for the subject (1985 / 1977). Freud often referred to this trope as an analogy for the sedimentation of the psychic unconscious, his metaphors even extended to referring to "unearthing" and "recovery" of memories or latent desires (2001 / 1896). His idea of exhuming or excavating an individuals' unconscious psyche as well as excavating history and culture are absolutely essential to the methodology of this thesis. That is, this thesis has endeavoured to excavate not only the artist's unconscious, but also the historical psyche of a traumatised and often-times repressed unconscious of South African culture. With regards to "psychoanalysing" the artist himself: his intentions, motivations and desires, it has been used to understand his motivation behind what he chooses to depict and why. It also makes a direct link to Kentridge's own traumata experienced as a child which has informed his later decisions of what to draw. For instance, both the traumatic events from his early childhood years are referenced in films, the one where he finds the photographs of the dead bodies in his father's study and the one where he witnesses the beating of a man in the street (please see *Chapter Two* for a detailed description of both instances, as recounted by Kentridge himself, as well as a depiction of the films in which they resurface). The archaeology metaphor has also been used to draw an analogy of how Kentridge's films themselves are sedimented with history, culture, politics and trauma, buried deep beneath their charcoal images

(please see *Chapter Nine* for a comprehensive analysis). It has even gone so far as to explain how Kentridge's artistic technique is also a process of sedimentation and recovery: his charcoal drawings are layered one upon another and erasures reveal different images with different meanings. In addition, it has used Freud's understanding of sedimentation and recovery to assist with understanding and recovering South Africa's collective trauma and repressed memories of the apartheid years. Please see *Chapter Eight* of this thesis for the sections on history and Sigmund Freud's *A Note upon the Mystic Writing Pad* (1899a). Both sections make use of Freud's ideas to construe and disinter Kentridge's films. Also see *Chapter Six: Memory and Trauma*, which details Freud's concept of "*trauerarbeit*"; and *Chapter Nine*, which applies these theories to the use of landscapes in Kentridge's filmic series.

Some of the foremost difficulties with Freud's theories include: his central positioning of the role of the father in the family set-up; the lack or absence of the mother figure; his emphasis, or rather over-emphasis on the Oedipal myth⁵; his biological determinism; the belief of feminist scholars who argued that Freud reinforced cultural and societal disadvantages that women experience in the Western world (Burnham

⁵ The general scholarly view is that while the Oedipal myth is given credence, it is criticised for its absolutism, totalisation and reductionism. For instance, Catherine Kearns in her book entitled *Psychoanalysis, Historiography and Feminist Theory*, uses Freud's theory of Oedipal myth in order to analyse history's phallocentric centre. However, she still distances herself completely from Freud's subscription to the Oedipus myth as a "developmental *absolute*" (1997:6; [emphasis, this researcher]).

Similarly, authors Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, in their work *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* state:

We do not deny that there is an Oedipal sexuality, an Oedipal heterosexuality and homosexuality, an Oedipal castration, as well as complete objects, global images, and specific egos. We deny that these are productions of the unconscious (1972:74).

2006⁶; Elliot 1994; Green 2004; Harvey 2007; Irigaray 1985 / 1977; Mitchell 2000). His works have been critiqued as sexist and dismissed as “pseudo-science” (Mitchell 2000, and Webster 2005 respectively); and he has often been accused of eliding history (Harvey 2007; Irigaray 1977). Although it is not the purview of this thesis to delve into the problematics of all of Freud’s theories, one such example of such a critique would concern the deficient definition of the “Unconscious”. Very simply the “Unconscious” refers to a mental process of which the individual is unaware. The “Unconscious” or the “System of the Unconscious” as defined by Freud is the opposite of the conscious and is an “entity” that influences oneself unbeknown to oneself. Its specific structure as characterised by Freud is defined thus: “exemption from mutual contradiction, primary process, timelessness, and replacement of external by psychical reality” (1915 / 1999a:40). It is also, according to Freud, the ultimate motivational source. However, Ann E. Berthoff pertinently asks: how does this “unconscious” differ from “motivation and determination?” (2008:148). She also refers to Susanne K. Langer’s astute observation that:

ideas, intentions, images and fantasies ... are rooted in the fabric of totally unfelt activities which Freud reified with the substantive term, ‘the unconscious’, which further leads to the critique of Freud’s “single system” as “overassumptive” (cited in Berthoff 2008:148).

Catherine Kearns adds to the argument by stating that the “Unconscious” should not be accepted as a deified absence “unknowable, and (omni)present)” (1997:7). However, while acknowledging its limitations, this concept is significant in its explanatory value in understanding the concept of trauma and excavating the “unconscious” in Kentridge’s films. It is also absolutely essential in understanding

⁶ See *Freud’s Women*, written by Lisa Appignanesi and John Forrester, who discuss this debate, that is, whether a women is born or made, in great detail (1992).

concepts such as “free association”, “screen memories”, “repression”, and the interpretation of latent content in an individual’s psyche, all of which, in turn, are highly pertinent to this study. Please see *Chapter Five* for an elucidation and application of Freud’s “screen memories”; and *Chapter Eight* for Freud’s *A Note upon the Mystic Writing Pad*, which looks at the metaphor of the unconscious as a palimpsest, and is thus compared to that of a stylus writing on parchment, which when erased, leaves a residue or trace. This is then likened to Kentridge’s charcoal drawing process, which has already been explained in *Chapter One* and *Chapter Two*. Briefly, however, it is a process of multiple layering of charcoal drawings upon one another, which when erased leave behind ghostly traces or residues. Patrick H. Hutton in his book, *History as an Art of Memory*, has postulated psychoanalysis as the “art of memory” (1993:66). It is in this very vein that Freud’s psychoanalytic method of inquiry has been applied to William Kentridge, as this thesis focuses on how and why Kentridge’s filmic series depicts memory.

Contemporary psychoanalysis is less a therapeutically practiced form of psychotherapy and tends to take its form as “psychoanalytic critique”, used by film and media theorists; in literary theory; in feminism and gender studies; in cultural studies; and even within political and social theories (Elliot 1994:2; Cohen 2007)⁷.

⁷ John Forrester posits this ardently:

Freud’s writings are an extraordinary resource, they are so and continue to be so only as long as the practice of analysis preserves and develops the form of discourse that Freud invented. And this form of discourse has become even more vital and fundamental insofar as other disciplines, from the theory of cinema to the philosophy and sociology of science, have looked to a general theory of discourse. The specific theory of the psychoanalytic discourse pre-exists all the other post-modern general theories of discourse; it challenges them to justify the very project of their generality, it offers them an example, maybe even a template, and it incites the question that is antecedent to any possible treatment of discourse. Freud did invent a new form of discourse whose extraordinary laws and possibilities are still being investigated (1990:3).

Textual criticism has been equated to that of psychoanalysis in its goal to uncover secrets and explain them, or as Toby Miller clearly states: “surfacing the sedimented to satisfy the analyst’s professional duty” (2000:475). This involves examining “the dregs, one might say, of the world of phenomena” (1982:52). For example, referring specifically to the use of psychoanalysis as a critical method of inquiry in film, Dudley Andrew posits that

psychoanalysis has been deployed to account for the unconscious of filmmakers and spectators, the nature of film as fantasy, the inevitability of identification for fantasy to come into play, and how the unconscious in film may intersect with wider connections of psychoanalysis and culture (1984:135).

This encapsulates what forms a part of the principal undertaking of this research: trying to account for Kentridge’s unconscious (predominantly in *Chapter 6: Memory and Trauma*); as well as the spectators of his films (evidenced in *Chapter 7: Questions of (Post)memory, Representation and Aesthetics*); and how the “unconscious” in Kentridge’s films mirrors or portrays the wider connections of a South African psyche and culture (a theme found throughout this inquiry).

However, it must again be stated that despite the importance of Freud’s psychoanalytic “template” or method of discourse, this thesis distinguishes itself somewhat from this treatise in that it does not appropriate it as is. In other words, this is a dissertation that cannot be categorised as a purely psychoanalytic study. It in no way adopts this methodological framework *in toto*. This is despite that fact that many of the theorists⁸ who have been referenced in this thesis themselves have been influenced by, or use psychoanalytic concepts. In keeping with the overall

⁸ His works have influenced the following authors, all of whom are pertinent to this study, in some manner: Roland Barthes; Victor Burgin; Jacques Derrida; Michel Foucault; Michael Halbwachs; Julia Kristeva; Laura Mulvey; and Hayden White.

approach used within this research, this study has adopted a deconstructive or sceptical approach to any one “grand narrative” or “master narrative / theory” of which psychoanalysis is one such an example. One such scholar who also makes use of Freud’s (and Jacques Lacan’s) theories is feminist filmmaker, Laura Mulvey, who this section now discusses.

3.2 Psychoanalysis and Laura Mulvey

Laura Mulvey wrote the seminal article *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema* in 1975⁹ (reprinted 1989). It is almost canonical in its stature, and has in the past thirty-something years been interrogated, refuted, revised and reiterated. It is even considered by some academic scholars as the “most influential publication in contemporary film studies” (Merck 2007:2). For those uninitiated in film or cultural studies, feminist or gender or even media studies, very simply put, Mulvey’s article argues that mainstream Hollywood cinema represents women as passive objects of male desire. She uses Freudian psychoanalysis and structuralism to support her argument. Her essay is often referred to as the theory of the “male gaze”, and her theory is so eminent that oft times little more is proffered by way of theory or explication. However, her theory is not without criticism and this study does not wish to make any assumptions on the part of the reader. Therefore, without transcribing her article in its entirety, a few important points need to be elaborated on. Mulvey

⁹ Reprinted in 1989, which is the edition that this thesis uses, but also in many anthologies, for example:

Robert Stam and Toby Miller’s (eds) *Film and Theory: An Anthology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000); and

Bill Nichols’ (ed.) *Movies and Methods. Volume II* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1985); and

Philip Rosen’s (ed.) *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986).

writes that “the determining male gaze projects its fantasy on the female figure” (1989:19). In doing so, the male characters are “bearers of the look” which is aimed at physically attractive, but sexually submissive female characters. Furthermore, the audience watching these films does so through the eyes of the dominant male protagonists, thereby positioning all of them as though they are heterosexual men desiring heterosexual women. In addition to that, she theorises that the camera (read here cameraman) that records the film is male. In other words she is referring to phallogentric Hollywood — the predominantly male directors and producers who make the decisions as to what a film records — who devise a voyeuristic position for the assumed heterosexual male spectator. As already stated, Mulvey’s article has been critiqued almost *ad nauseum*, and revisited repeatedly, including constant re-examination from Mulvey herself¹⁰. A few of the central criticisms are discussed here briefly. Linda Kauffman criticises the essay for its lack of objectivity (1998:72); and Mandy Merck argues that the essay is lacking in academic rigour (2007:11). Not only because it is so descriptive in style, but because the foundational (that is, psychoanalytical) concepts are neither defined in the text nor footnoted, which as Merck rightly argues, would make the terminology and constant reference to psychoanalytic discourse impossible to understand if the reader was not already familiar with these terms (2007:11). Noël Carroll contests Mulvey’s article on empirical grounds: he suggests that male erotic display in mainstream Hollywood film is not that rare (1996:260-274). He also argues that the genres of comedy and biopics do not eroticise the female form. Bill Nichols criticises Mulvey’s over-reliance

¹⁰ For instance, please see *Visual and Other Pleasures* (1989) and *Fetishism and Curiosity* (1996) where Mulvey discusses contemporary political, economic, social and cultural changes that have impacted on her article.

on psychoanalysis and its perceived “indifference to social specificity” (2000:47)¹¹. Another criticism of the psychoanalytic tenets she uses is articulated by Dan Laughy, that of her presumed audience responses (2007:105). In other words, she assumes that because visual pleasure is constructed by unconscious psychical processes and fashioned by invisible patriarchal ideologies, female cinema spectators are repressed without being conscious of this. This also pre-empts an argument as postulated by academic Annette E. Kuhn of Mulvey’s lack of empirical research, which if carried out would deliver conflicting results (2000:442-447). These criticisms, while valid, are not relevant to this thesis. Neither is her theory of the “male gaze”. What is relevant is her general idea of the visual pleasures, or scopophilic / voyeuristic pleasures, which are experienced when viewing a film. It is also the embodiment of the diegetic look and the identification of the spectator with the character in a film that is of consequence to this study. This therefore relates directly to the pleasure enjoyed by viewing the aesthetics of Kentridge’s films, despite their often gory depictions. It is also academic support of the idea of the spectator’s identification with the central characters, Soho Eckstein and Felix Teitlebaum. The spectator’s identification with these characters means empathising with the issues that these characters grapple with, such as, guilt, responsibility, mourning and accountability, within the context of apartheid and post-apartheid. Her work is therefore referenced in *Chapter Seven* of this study, albeit very briefly. As Miriam Hansen reiterates, cinema is about the spectator’s “perceptual identification with seeing and being seen” (1994:2). The processes of identification are significant:

¹¹ This is actually predicated on an inaccurate premise, Freud was aware of the cultural and historical positioning of the self:

I must endeavour to construct a narrative in which subjective and objective attitudes, biographical and historical interests, are combined in a new proportion (1925:7).

See also: Freud: *Moses and Monotheism* (1939).

the audience views the images, and then identifies with parts of them, complete with all the characters and their own psychic conflicts. This exposition discusses post-structuralism and postmodernism next.

3.3 Post-structuralist and postmodernist concepts

The theoretical approach of post-structuralism, which synthesises psychoanalysis, feminism and deconstruction, was developed out of a profound scepticism of total theory (Stam 2000). Its central tenet argues for a double articulation of discourses and non-discourses (said or unsaid) of all texts (Stam 2000). It looks specifically at the significant discourses surrounding the text as well as those found within the text. This thesis has only selectively focused on three main post-structuralist tenets (cf. Irigaray 1985 / 1977; Kristeva 1996; Mulvey 1975; Stam 2000). Firstly, that of spectator identification which is expounded on in *Chapter Seven: Questions of (Post)memory, Representation and Aesthetics*. The second tenet deals with the importance of the context of a text: the social, cultural, and historical contexts. The texts, in this instance, are the nine films that comprise the *Drawings for Projection* series, and the context is that of South Africa (apartheid and post-apartheid). South Africa's political, historical and social milieu not only contextualised Kentridge's works, he was highly critical of the events that were being practiced in South Africa at the time of making these films. Thirdly, there is the post-structuralist tenet that a text is never transparent, innocent, or natural. Therefore it has to be deconstructed or unpicked in order to understand its modes of representation. Deconstructive films are therefore counter-cinematic, both aesthetically and politically (Stam 2000). This is exemplified in Kentridge's films aesthetically, as they are surrealist and flout Classical Hollywood cinema, and politically, because they were anti-apartheid and

blatantly challenged the apartheid status-quo. This is pivotal to the films *Johannesburg, 2nd Greatest City after Paris, Mine*, and *Monument*. All these films were made during the apartheid years and were a damning testament to the ruling Nationalist Party at the time. These films not only defied the apartheid regime but also testified to the state-sanctioned atrocities committed under this regime.

Postmodernism¹² as a discourse is self-reflexive in that it provides its own texts with criticism. As a term it is polysemic and has many contributing theorists. It is also considered to be difficult to define¹³ (Klages 2010¹⁴; Livingstone 2010). There are three broad areas of “postmodernism”: as an epoch, beginning “after” modernism; as an aesthetic style; and thirdly, as a discourse. Dick Hebdige in his book, *Hiding the Light*, identifies three pivotal concepts that make up postmodernist discourse: firstly, there is the negation of totalisation, such as a defining essential human nature; secondly, there is the negation of utopia. This stems from Jean-François Lyotard’s disbelief in what he terms the “grand *écrits*” of the West: scepticism of, for example, science. The third concept identified by Hebdige is the negation of teleology (the negation of a grand design of purpose) (1988). Essentially, it is an emphasis on

¹² Even though scholar Mary Klages claims that postmodernism is difficult to define she has attempted what is, arguably, an excellent encapsulation:

rejecting boundaries between high and low forms of art, rejecting rigid genre distinctions, emphasizing pastiche, parody, bricolage, irony, and playfulness. Postmodern art (and thought) favors reflexivity and self-consciousness, fragmentation and discontinuity (especially in narrative structures), ambiguity, simultaneity, and an emphasis on the destructured, decentered, dehumanized subject (2010).

¹³ Which is presumably why Jean-François Lyotard wrote an essay attempting to do just that: *Answering the Question: What is Postmodernism?* (1982).

¹⁴ Mary Klages writes of postmodernism:

Postmodernism is a complicated term, or set of ideas, one that ... is hard to define, because it ... appears in a wide variety of disciplines or areas of study, including art, architecture, music, film, literature, sociology, communications, fashion and technology (2010).

decentring; displacement; openness; heterodoxy; contingency; multiplicity; plurality; intertextuality; hybridity; and multidimensionality. It proposes a rejection of meta-narratives and totalising “truth” claims. Theorists that have contributed to this discourse include, amongst others, Jean Baudrillard; Jean-François Lyotard; Frederic Jameson; Hayden White; Keith Jenkins; Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari; Jacques Lacan; and Julia Kristeva. Critics have dismissed postmodernism as “frivolous” and “intellectually irresponsible” (Anchor 2001:112). This relates directly to how postmodernism posits an “anything goes” approach, which, in the discipline of history for example, could be used to advocate historical denialism, such as that of fascism or genocide. Postmodernism is dismissed for its novel-jargon and its “vertiginous quality of the postmodern thought-world” (Anchor 2001:112). Jürgen Habermas, as a vocal opponent of postmodernism refers to it as “destructive” and “rampant” (cited in Livingstone 2010:31). Harold Bloom in his book, *The Anxiety of Influence: A theory of Poetry*, writes contemptuously:

They are postmodernists. Their peculiar, rather desperate view only purports to be revolutionary. Instead it is empty. It is postmodernism collapsing in upon itself, crushed to dust under the weight of its own catatonic meaninglessness (1997:xxv).

Other criticisms include scathing remarks, such as describing academics who still teach postmodernism as existing as “islands of outdated trendiness, archipelagos of discarded academic chic”, and “postmodernism is dead” (Pontuso 2008:215; cf. Huyssen 2006).

Post-structuralism and postmodernism as discourses are also not the theoretical framework within which Kentridge’s films are critiqued. However, this framework uses the postmodern techniques of discourse analysis and post-structuralist technique of deconstruction to interrogate Kentridge’s films in order to further

articulate and explicate them. As described in *Chapter Four*, dealing with the methodology, there are several relevant principal tenets, from which this study emanates, which are quintessentially postmodern. Firstly, there is the refusal of a grand or authoritative truth, or a master narrative. There is no one authoritative, overriding narrative describing the past: “A complete, final and definitive account or interpretation of any historical matter is, therefore, an intrinsic impossibility” (Macfie 2010:223). William Kentridge has also stated:

I believe that in the indeterminacy of drawing, the contingent way that images arrive in the work ... Trains of thought that seem to be going somewhere but can't quite be brought to a conclusion. If there were to be a very clear, ethical or moral summing-up in my work, it would have a false authority” (cited in Christov-Bakargiev 1998: 35).

Secondly, there is the challenge of the chronological, historical, linear construction of time because it makes it teleological in nature (for instance, either Marxist, Christian or liberal). This study rather opts for “anti-narrative non-stories” as expounded by postmodernist Hayden White. Kentridge’s films challenge a chronological, linear construction of time, this concept is central to the film *History of the Main Complaint* (please also see *Chapter Eight: Memory, History, Identity, Time and Space*).

Thirdly, the postmodernist aesthetic as defined by both experimentation and the surreal. His films are indeed surreal and hallucinatory (see *Chapter Seven: Questions of (Post)memory, Representation and Aesthetics*). Fourthly, a text contains no fixed meaning and is open to a multiplicity of interpretations. Art historian and academic, Michael Godby, writes:

Kentridge in fact rejoices both in the suggestive openness of his forms and in the visible layering of images that tends to preclude any single fixed reading. We ... see that in his presentation of both character and narrative, Kentridge also tends to refuse a final, authoritative account of events (1992: unpaginated).

Lastly, this study embraces the postmodern ideas of “otherness”; “diversity”; “decentring”; “displacement”; “strangeness”; the marginalised; and the subaltern, in order to elucidate Kentridge’s films. Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev has observed:

Kentridge addresses uncertainty and process because they allow the Self to approach the world with humility and openness to change, rather than with preconceptions and authority. He is able to avoid the authoritarian modern gaze — the panoptikon — by splitting the Self into many different voices and identities: Soho, Felix, Nandi, Harry, etc. Like his undefined drawing style, these selves are never fixed, but constantly shifting, splitting, condensing and dividing” (1998:34).

Kentridge has also stated that Soho Eckstein and Felix Teitlebaum are a “displaced self-portrait” (cited in Christov-Bakargiev 1998:13¹⁵). His characters are also decentred and “schizophrenic” as portrayed most evidently in his film *Stereoscope*¹⁶. In terms of giving voice to the subaltern and the marginalised, Kentridge thematically does just that, focusing on the dislocated, the disenfranchised, and the exploited. These themes are fundamental to the films *Monument* and *Mine*. Kentridge has claimed of his films and their representation of apartheid and the Holocaust as, “elucidating its contradictions and complexities” (cited in Christov-Bakargiev 1998:16).

There is one other characteristic of postmodernism that is central to this study. Philosopher Richard Rorty, in his book, *Essays on Heidegger and Others*, argues that postmodernists oppose injustice; they are often severe critics of violence, war, oppression, and human rights violations (1991:66; and re-iterated by Pontuso 2008).

¹⁵ cf. Alemanni 2006:13, 47 and 81; Benezra 2001:15; Cameron 1999:45; Coetzee 1999:86.

¹⁶ Please also see *Chapter Nine: Memory, Landscapes, Cities and Monuments* for a discussion of “cultural schizophrenia” and his characters as displaced and decentred selves.

Kentridge's filmic series, by virtue of its thematic content; anti-violence stance; depictions of horror; denunciation of the atrocities of apartheid and the Holocaust, is indeed in part, "postmodern". This is not to say that this study is arguing that the artist William Kentridge is a postmodernist. Or that his works are entirely and only "postmodern" — to do so would be anathema to the ethos of postmodernism. In Kentridge's own words: "I am interested in a political art, that is to say an art of ambiguity, contradiction, uncompleted gestures and uncertain endings" (cited in Godby 1992: unpaginated). Postmodernism and its ideas of history is explained here, with an emphasis on historian Hayden White's works.

3.4 Postmodernism, history and Hayden White

History has traditionally been written with a capital 'H' — *History*. The historian's History has always been considered to be *the* evidentiary, factual, official or objectively, externally verifiable, documented truth. Historians have also conventionally written in a transparent, non-jargonistic, or non-discourse-laden style, enabling easy reading and clear understanding (Carrard 1985; Conkin and Stromberg 1989; Jenkins 1999; Kearns 1997). Keith Jenkins has long distinguished between different types of history. The first is 'History' with an "upper-case H", and the second is 'history' with the 'lower-case h'. The former refers specifically to a grand "totalising" metanarrative, such as Judeo-Christian narratives, Marxist grand narrative, or Hegelian philosophy. The latter 'history' is a history that is taught by academics to their student (Jenkins 1999). It is therefore considered to be more interrogative of the discipline as a whole. Historians of History have avoided hermeneutics; philosophy; metaphor; analogy; rhetoric; and poetic or adjective-laden descriptions (Kearns 1997; Jenkins 1999; White 1966, 1973, 1974, 1996, and 2005).

They write in an objective, detached, depersonalised manner (Kearns 1997; Iggers 2010; Jenkins 1999; White 1966, 1973, 1974, 1996, and 2005). The reasoning behind this is easy to understand. History should, according to most historians, be written in an objective style that is accessible to anyone who cares to read it, including laymen, and it should not be open to interpretation or textual or inter-textual readings. This type of “History” is largely a hegemonic view of what counts as worth remembering (Kearns 1997). It should also, according to Georg G. Iggers, be written with the expert authority of the historian and completely devoid of the historian’s own personality (2010:35).

The postmodernist critique of history is that it is almost always ideological, presentist, politically motivated and subjective (Jenkins 1999; Munslow 1997 and 2003; White 1966, 1973, 1974, 1996, and 2005). Postmodernists also argue that history, as a text, therefore contains no one fixed meaning and is therefore open to many multiple and inter-textual meanings. History is not definitive and is open to many readings. It does not contain only one total, singular “Truth” and is open to interpretation. There is no one overriding master narrative, but many mini-narratives; it is constructed according to questions asked and choices made as to what is decidedly important to remember and what is not; it is therefore subjective (Jenkins 1999; Munslow 1997 and 2003; White 1966, 1973, 1974, 1996, and 2005).

Conservative and traditional historians have dismissed history as defined and conceptualised by Hayden White, Alun Munslow, and Keith Jenkins (amongst

others)¹⁷ as nothing more than “localised contaminations, temporary but nonetheless lamentable and pernicious”; their argument is simple: if theory (such as literary, semiotic or philosophical), then not history (Kearns 1997:13). However, despite this reasoning, this “history” as advocated by Hayden White, Keith Jenkins, Alon Confino, and Alun Munslow, does not simply disavow objectivity, positivism or realism. While it does not make claims to a total truth or grand historical narrative, it still adheres to the basic necessary tenets or methodology of gathering and recording history: the verification of facts; the accuracy of communication; and evidentiary support. Despite this, traditional historians appear vitriolic in their attacks on postmodern historians. For example, Geoffrey R. Elton, in a lecture series, proclaimed that this “history” is “the cancerous radiation that comes from the forehead of Derrida and Foucault” (1991:41). Alexander Lyon Macfie describes postmodernism as a devastating “assault on history” (2010:209). And Richard Evans vilifies postmodernist historians as “the intellectual barbarians at the disciplinary gates” (1997:218). This does need much explaining; the “intellectual barbarians” are the postmodernist academics who are challenging the discipline of History.

While this thesis only references Hayden White’s concept of “anti-narrative non-stories”, most specifically in *Chapter Eight* of this thesis, a very general overview and critique of his perspective is offered here. This is in part to further contextualise his ideas and also to highlight some of his views as they further make up a postmodern perspective of history. He defines traditional History as an emphasis on facts, and a commitment to one universal method of empirical research, which demands

¹⁷ Theodor Adorno; Roland Barthes; Jean Baudrillard; Jacques Derrida; Michel Foucault; Luce Irigaray; Julia Kristeva; and Jean-François Lyotard are amongst those academics and historians that refuse a “grand” or “master” narrative of history.

detachment, disinterest and impartiality (1966:9). His book *Metahistory*, published in 1973, realigns history with art, and by extension, imagination¹⁸. In 1974 he argued further that historical narratives are complex, difficult structures that contain not only found elements, but invented ones as well ([1974] 1998:16 and 31). While stressing the commonalities between the historical narrative and a novel he has led some critics to argue that the arbitrariness of the process of an historian “inventing” history has given credibility to genocide disavowalists, historical revisionists and holocaust denialists, or even giving authority for purposeful distortion or “selective” memory accounts (Hacking 1999:2; Iggers 2010:42). Furthermore, White’s critics are incensed by his characterisation of historiography as “a form of fiction-making” (1978:122; cf. Anchor 2001:107). White is only too well aware of these criticisms, but he is arguing for historiography to responsibly communicate history not only as true factual statements but also, and most importantly, to write about what these events *mean*¹⁹ (2005:333). Vasso Kindi elaborates on White’s argument by adding that recounting “simple, factual truth seems so superficial, so crude, so insensitive to the complexities of the case” (2010:261). Hayden White and other postmodern historians want history to be more than statistics, and detached, “scientific” reports (Kindi 2010; Friedländer, 1979; 1993, 1997; Young 1988, 1993). William Kentridge himself has emphatically stated: “it is about the impossibility of factuality. Facts are not enough” (cited in Christov-Bakargiev 1998:17). However, this does not mean that White is arguing for inaccuracy, inconsistency, and completely fabricated historical

¹⁸ So too does Johan Huizenga. Please see *The Aesthetic Element in Historical Thought* (1968).

¹⁹ In his article, *The Public Relevance of Historical Studies: A Reply to Dirk Moses*, White writes:

The past is the realm of the dead ... It is a place of fantasy that we confront with anxiety ... The past is an absent presence, the equivalent for a community of what one’s ancestors or, indeed, one’s own childhood, is for the individual person. The dead can be studied scientifically, but science cannot tell us what we desire to know about the past. Or rather, those aspects of the past that can be studied scientifically do not yield the kinds of information or knowledge that drives us to study the past in the first place (2005:333).

accounts. Robert Anchor points out that one of the distinctive tropes in White (and Keith Jenkins') discourse is that the "past is chaotic, radically contingent, a burden, a nightmare from which we seek to awaken" (2001:110). Understandably then, the postmodernists accuse the outmoded historians of attempting to "domesticate the fantastic and to normalize the unspeakable" (Fussell 1975:74).

Hayden White has also argued that historians have rigidly adhered to positivism, and accused them of allowing the intellectual movements of the 20th century to pass them by (1983). Furthermore White has reasoned that historians have failed to endeavour any "surrealistic, expressionistic, or existentialist historiography" (1983:43). He has therefore argued that history / ies should take the form of "anti-narrative non-stories" produced in either a literary or cinematic form (1996:32). Narrative itself has traditionally taken a very static form: beginning, middle, and end. This narrative structure was conceptualised by Aristotle in his work *Poetics* (335 BCE), and has been the foundation of all narrative structures as understood in a literary or cinematic / televisual form ever since. It has as its quintessence: a linear structure; chronology; an immutable and immovable beginning, middle and end. The definition of "story" similarly denotes a fixed beginning, middle and end. White has argued that this narrative structure has, as a historical tradition, attempted to impose a mastery over historical events, stories, and memories, which implies a sanitised version of events, specifically constructed, and disinterested (1996). Furthermore, he argues that claiming mastery over one's memories is impossible due to the fragmentary and ephemeral nature of memories (1996). He therefore proposes "anti-narrative non-stories" as a method of recording history (1996:32). It can include anything from narratives beginning with the end of a story, relating the

beginning and then lastly providing the middle. Non-stories could comprise anything from a poetry account of a historical event, to including fantastical elements or magic realism. This idea is central to the film *History of the Main Complaint* and is discussed in *Chapter Eight* of this dissertation. Many historical accounts have been recorded thus. For example, Salman Rushdie, in his novel *Midnight's Children* (1991), Rushdie archives Indian history through the narrator Saleem's "chutneyfication" of history: he bottles history and memories and likens it to chutney. The pickling is mixed and remade differently every time, albeit subtly. This is a metaphor for how one remakes reality every time one experiences it or remembers it. Rushdie has telepathic children who disappear and reappear, time travel and even the changing of genders, but all this exists alongside the horrors of war. In *Time's Arrow* (1991), Martin Amis focuses directly on the Holocaust. It is the story of a Nazi doctor, which is revealed in a form of reverse chronology — this serves to question narrative structure and its cause and effect. When the narrative is reversed, effect becomes cause. Using this very contrivance / narrative device, Amis produces a post-Holocaust style of writing fiction that ideally encapsulates just how difficult it is to explain and depict the Holocaust rationally and logically (Amis 1991; cf. Hungerford 2004:187). Another fascinating representation of the Holocaust is *The White Hotel* (1981) by D. M. Thomas²⁰, who uses a specific Jewish (albeit

²⁰ There are many such examples, for instance:

The two novels by author Thomas Pynchon: *The Crying of Lot 49* (1966) which deals with the conspiracy of the bones of WW II American soldiers being sold and used as charcoal cigarette lighters. His later novel, *Gravity's Rainbow* (1973) deals with war veterans in the period of months after D-day was announced. He uses non-linear narratives and intermingles facts with fantasy.

Another example is Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five* (1969; also known as *The Children's Crusade: A Duty-Dance with Death*) about the fire-bombing of the German town of Dresden during WW II. American soldier Billy Pilgrim gets caught by German soldiers and kept as a prisoner of war. He then becomes "unstuck in time" and is captured by aliens from Tralfamadore and exhibited in a

secular) method of viewing the world, namely psychoanalysis. He uses this method to convey the awful loss of the Holocaust. He creates a patient of Freud's, Frau Anna. Her biography, containing her ailments, dreams and desires, gives a specific particularity to an individual, one who was murdered by the Nazis. Her world, bizarre and unique, creates a specific psychology / psychopathology, one that Freud attempts to decipher through psychoanalysis. So vivid are her imaginings and desires that the reader is moved by her loss. Her recounting highlights that these numerous victims of the Holocaust are in fact unique individuals, with their own desires and needs and idiosyncrasies. They should not be relegated to mere statistics²¹ (Thomas 1981; cf. Hungerford 2004:187). Kentridge does a similar thing, in that he makes Soho / Felix resemble himself personally. He therefore personalises the experiences of apartheid, surrealistically fashioned in his films, his

zoo. However, it is the fire-bombing of Dresden that affects Billy's mind. It is a non-linear narrative that incorporates fantasy, science fiction and factual evidence.

There is also Günter Grass' *The Tin Drum* (1959) which deals with the horrors of the Second World War in both Germany and Poland as seen through the eyes of the manic "dwarf" Oskar Matzerath.

A play that is also an example of White's "non-narrative non-stories" is *I am my own Wife* by Doug Wright (2004). The play is about the life of Charlotte van Mahlsdorf, born a man and become a woman and her experiences surviving both Nazism and Communist East Germany, changing her identity constantly to avoid persecution and even death.

One last example is W. G. Sebald's historical novel entitled *Austerlitz*, about a young man Jacques Austerlitz who discovers that he is Jewish and that his biological parents died in Theresienstadt concentration camp. His journey is related in a narrative that lacks paragraphing and includes unusually long sentences (9 pages long in one instance). Sebald mixes reality or fact and fantasy and includes evocative black and white photographs throughout the novel.

²¹ It is almost impossible to conceptualise 11 million individuals being systematically murdered. *The Paper Clip Project* was started by 8th Grader's in 1998 in the American town of Whitwell in order to try and "show" how many 11 million is. They collected paper clips from all over the world, in part because the people of Norway wore them on their lapels as a form of resistance during the occupation in Norway by the Nazis during World War II. The 11 million paper clips are kept in a German cattle car (which was actually used during the war to transport Jews and other "undesirables" to the death and concentration camps and was flown to America) (Joe Fab [Miramax] 2004). It is called The Children's Holocaust Memorial.

character / s existentially raising the questions of freedom and responsibility. In doing this the audience can relate to one individual among many. He has exacted an experiment of archivisation, he has exteriorised memories from the private to the public domain. He is acutely aware that there is no one originary moment, for either himself or his country — his works are therefore non-narrative in form, with no fixed beginning, middle, or end. His writing of history is subjective, a construct.

While White's conceptual idea of history as surrealism, or "anti-narrative non-stories" is specifically dealt with in *Chapter Eight* of this thesis as a means to provide academic support for the constructs of Kentridge's documenting of South Africa's past and present, including all its horrors, the postmodern idea of history pervades this study throughout. In other words, it posits South African history as many histories, both public and personal; it also refuses a grand narrative of South African history. With regard to the latter, one need only to look to the TRC as support that history is not a master narrative. The TRC bore witness to the fact that many histories, many historical events were not known and after many years were only being revealed then (that is, 1996). South Africa's history not only had to be re-written in light of the exhuming of this "new" history / histories but it highlighted the fact that the previous, supposedly official, documented history of South Africa was ideological and politically motivated in nature²². And incomplete.

No matter how creative, or how much creative licence is taken, different narratives and unique imagery can represent / express historical events (even with

²² Similarly, historians William Dunning and James G. Randall in the 1930s wrote the historiography of slavery and its reconstruction in the United States of America. They wrote objectively, dispassionately, and provided a historically factual account that including the obvious "inherent racial inferiority of blacks" (cited in Iggers 2010:40).

grotesqueries) authentically and with relevance. Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev writing about “*art autre*” or “*art informel*” claims similarly:

[A]dvanced artists felt that direct representation of concentration camp scenes — barbed wire, striped camp uniforms, brutal guards, watchtowers, etc. — ran the risk of banalising the horror into stereotypical images and spectacle, into predictable and over-explicit representations. By abstracting the representation, art, it seemed, became more universal, and therefore more true (1998:33).

Christov-Bakargiev also writes that, “Kentridge always focuses on the personal narrative, the private story of the individual, not on grand, abstract accounts of South Africa or apartheid” (1998:142). In doing so, he personalises the effects that apartheid has had on South Africa. This is significant because as a viewer it is less easy to dismiss, as one tends to relate more directly and intimately with one individual rather than a thousand statistics. He gives the victim / perpetrator (Soho / Felix) a face, an identity, and he in turn embodies the shame, guilt, remorse, responsibility and mourning for a whole country. Also in keeping with a postmodern historiography, this study posits that Kentridge’s films are important because they portray the same / identical images that emerged out of apartheid, but because he does so in such a unique way they continue to shock and disgust, resulting in fresh empathy for the victims of this violent regime. His films do not leave the viewer desensitised but rather astonished and repulsed, causing the audience to re-identify with those violated by apartheid. He shocks the spectator out of their complacency. This is also in keeping with authors Catherine Kearns (1997) and Carl Becker (1973) who argue that history has several performative responsibilities: firstly, to bring the past into the present, with all its horrors, in order not only for it to be remembered but also to avoid complacency. Secondly, it has a responsibility to aid people to “remember” what they did not experience first-hand or witness directly. The central

concerns of history cannot in any way avoid the issue of memory: remembrance, memoirs, memorials, forgetting.

Before focusing on the discourse on memory, this section concludes by quoting White from a conversation that he had with Erland Rogne in 2009:

Well, I'm really concerned about the discipline. I'm much more interested in the way creative writers, literary writers, are dealing with history. You see, you need imagination to close the gap between the present and the past. And I think one of the things you have to do, then, is to show how elusive, how difficult it is (2009:75).

This quote is important to keep in mind before denigrating White for ostensibly condoning holocaust / genocide denialism as his critics are prone to doing. His emphasis on “non-narrative non-stories” should be taken in the milieu for which it is meant, the context of creative filmmakers, artists and novelists (White 1996 and 2009).

To conclude this section on psychoanalysis, post-structuralism and postmodernism, it can be argued that many of the principle tenets from these discourses are therefore apposite to this thesis. Therefore psychoanalysis, postmodernism, and to a lesser extent, post-structuralism, despite their critics, have contributed a significant explanatory value to deconstructing Kentridge's filmic *Drawings for Projection* series. This chapter now turns its attention to memory.

3.5 Discourse on memory

Graham Richards writes of memory: “it might, perhaps justifiably, be suggested that the category of ‘memory’ is simply too sweeping, a folk-psychological term of scant scientific utility” (2002:129). Richards' remark is easy to understand in light of the

proliferation of books, articles and lectures emerging from disparate academic disciplines, from history to cultural studies to psychology, that have multiplied in the last decade that deal with “memory”. Anna Green calls it a “memory boom” (2004:36). As a result of this proliferation, “memory” is used almost as a catch word, or at the very least, a fashionable one. However, memory discourse or memory studies are contending with the following lexicons: “popular memory”; “collective memory” (Halbwachs 1950 / 1992); “sites of memory (*lieux de mémoire*” (Nora 1989); “public memory”; and “social memory”. These differ from an individual’s memory, which refers to the person’s ability to conserve information and to recount that which has happened in the past. Generally though, there is a commonality between individual memory and collective memory: that is, the ways in which individuals construct a sense of the past. Alon Confino argues that memory studies have, significantly, been used to explore the memory of those who experienced an event first-hand; as well as the representation of the past and the making of it into shared cultural knowledge by successive generations with artefacts (1997)²³.

As to how individual memories differ from collective memories and to what extent, and how to define both types of memories, is briefly deliberated here. This section concludes with a critical exposition of the discourse of memory.

3.5.1 Individual memory

Samuel Hynes defines individual memory as, “memory is the mental faculty by which we preserve or recover our pasts, and also the events recovered” (1999:206). Very simply, individual memory is considered to be individually-based and exists in the

²³ For instance: museums; literary works; commemorations; films; and art.

mind of an individual. Memory is fundamental to the formation of individual and collective identity (Eyerman 2004). Memory has long been associated with the concepts of the self / mind; consciousness / unconscious; identity as recorded / identity as constructed; and perception / imagination (Favorini 2007:31). Even if a person's identity is not specifically part of a collective identity or collective memories, say for instance, a collective trauma such as the Holocaust, identity is still shaped by the social, the cultural and the political.

3.5.2 Collective memory

Collective memory is comprised of recollections / remembrances of a past that is determined and shaped by a group of people. Barbie Zelizer suggests that collective memory raises issues of contestation, negotiation, and sharing (2003:214). Remembering as a group therefore is not only about memory identification and recall, but about social, cultural and political norms. Ron Eyerman defines collective memory as "recollections of a shared past" which coalesces the social group over time and space by affording them a "narrative" structure (2004:161). This narrative structure situates the individual within that structure and allows for a representation of those collective memories in the form of a text: written; filmed; painted; told; celebrated; and / or commemorated. The past also then becomes present through symbolic interactions, with memory central both to those interactions and texts (Antze and Lambek 1996; Crane 1997; Confino 1997; Eyerman 2004; Green 2004). Barry Schwartz's definition of collective memory defines it thus, "a representation of the past embodied in both historical evidence and commemorative symbolism" (2000:9). His definition allows for a distinctive individual and collective memory in that the latter is exemplified in texts and practices which have a supra-individual

characteristic. Alon Confino likewise defines the concept: “the representation of the past and the making of it into shared cultural knowledge by successive generations in ‘vehicles of memory’²⁴, such as books, films, museums, commemorations and others” (1997:1186). One cannot however, attempt a definition of the concept without mentioning sociologist Maurice Halbwachs²⁵, who originated the term. He wrote in *On Collective Memory*:

we can understand each memory as it occurs in individual thought only if we locate each within the thought of the corresponding group. We cannot properly understand their relative strength and the ways in which they combine within individual thought unless we connect the individual to the various groups of which he is simultaneously a member (1980:53).

His work on collective memory implies a multiplicity of pasts and memory. Collective memory should allow for individual development as well as intervals and delays of memory and the transience of generations.

Before focussing on the critical exposition of memory studies, there are two more points to be made by Halbwachs that are significant: firstly, collective memory and lived experience interpenetrate each other; and secondly, collectives and individuals interact in their representation and production of collective memory (1980:55; cf. Kansteiner 2002; Terdiman 1993; Zelizer 1998²⁶). Schwart, Confino and Halbwach’s definitions of collective memory are intrinsic to this doctoral enquiry. This chapter now focuses on an analysis of memory studies.

²⁴ This term was coined by Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi in his book entitled *Zakhor: Jewish history and Jewish Memory* (1989).

²⁵ He was born 1877 and died in Buchenwald in 1945. His book, *The Collective Memory* was published posthumously in 1950 and only translated in 1980, his second book, *On Collective Memory* was published in 1952 and translated in 1992.

²⁶ Appropriately described by Zelizer to mean: “collective memories have texture, existing in the world rather than in a person’s head” (1998:4).

3.5.3 Exposition on memory studies

One of the critiques of this memory lexicon is that terms such as “public memory”, “cultural memory”, “historical memory”, “social memory”, and “collective memory” are not distinct enough nor have they been given the individual attention they deserve (Zelizer 2003). Another problem that Barbie Zelizer highlights is that social, or collective memory has been substituted for individual memory (2003:215). Ann Green, in her article *Individual Remembering and ‘Collective Memory’* argues similarly that scholarly work “conflates collective and individual memory or places the latter beyond reach”; or deems the latter “insignificant” (2004:38; 35; cf. Crane 1997; Kansteiner 2002).

Their comment as a criticism of the modern discourse of memory is interesting and at complete odds with this study. This thesis argues for both a clearly demarcated individual memory and a collective, or social, memory: the individual as Soho Eckstein or Felix Teitlebaum (or a displaced Kentridge); and the collective comprised of South Africa’s subaltern memories. This also relates to how this thesis has positioned Kentridge’s work as an example of postmemory and clearly differentiates between his portrayals of personal memories: *Felix in Exile*, *History of the Main Complaint*, and *WEIGHING and ... WANTING* which all contain personal, traumatic memories. His films also contain collective or social memories of experiences he did not experience first-hand or witness first-hand, the traumatic collective memories of the victims and perpetrators living in an apartheid regime. This argument then uses the concept of postmemory to explain how Kentridge has appropriated these collective memories through empathy and identification. These observations are postulated in *Chapter Five* of this study.

Although Zelizer has theorised that collective memory has been substituted for individual memory, she has written an article detailing the distinct characteristics of collective memory (2003). One of the differences worth mentioning is that remembering is no longer finite, with a specific beginning, middle and end; and is no longer constituted in time and space, but is constantly transforming and evolving. (2003:218). As a result of this, there is now attention being paid to “memory undone” or forgetting, or amnesia: “How memories are erased, forgotten, or willed absent has come to be seen as equally important to the ways in which memories are set in place” (2003:220; cf. Halbwachs 1992:172).

Barbie Zelizer cautions scholars of the dangers of assuming that “collective memory” is a “catch-all” for “social memory”, “public memory” and “cultural memory” and that academics should examine these concepts more rigorously (2003:235; cf. Confino 1997). This is a particularly valid criticism. However, this study does use the concepts of “collective”, “cultural” and “social” memories interchangeably, although it does not fall into the trap of subsuming the individual into the “collective”. Granted, while such an intricate and rigorous analysis is called for, it falls outside of the purview of this study. In defence of this research though, it has attempted to keep the definitions used within consistent throughout and avoided what Zelizer refers to as “conceptual murkiness” and a scholarly “leakiness” (2003:235).

One of the critiques of Maurice Halbwachs is that he argued that collective memories would be made up of individuals in a group who were in complete harmony with one another. Unfortunately this would mean that an individual’s memory could be

amalgamated with the group's collective memory (Green 2004:38). As a functional mechanism, collective memory would serve to unite and solidify identity memories. However, if conflicting or dissenting memories arose they would automatically be excluded and would then fade over time (Burke 1997; Thomson 1994). Alistair Thomson elaborates on that by explaining that the result of choosing to support / cohere to a collective memory and collective identity will cause "psychic anxieties" if by doing so the memories of a painful and traumatic past result in feeling unsafe. The result: an incoherent personal identity. Thomson states that this inability to feel safe or cohere into a wholly formed identity will cause "unresolved tension and fragmented, contradictory identities" (1994:10).

The central problems relating to memory discourse are therefore: a lack of critical reflection on its methodology and theorisation; fragmentation; an absence of a clear focus; and the subsuming of individual memory by collective memory (Crane 1997; Confino 1997; Green 2004; Kansteiner 2002; Thomson 1994; Zelizer 2003). Despite these problems, this discourse has been pivotal to the study on memory and even the scholars who have critiqued this discourse of memory have acknowledged that. For instance Alon Confino argues that its "open-endedness" is actually a positive thing (1997:1387).

However, there are many scholars, scientists and psychologists that vehemently dispute memory studies as they exist in the humanities and arts. Amongst those are cognitive psychologists, neuroscientists and neuropsychologists. David F. Sherry and Daniel L. Schacter, for example, argue that memories only belong to the individual and characterise his/her personal life and identity. In this case, memory is

a completely subjective experience and cannot be collectively shared. According to their research in neuroscience memory does not retain, (excepting for fragments and bits and pieces), nor reconstruct the original impression²⁷. This emphasis on individual subjectivity to the extent that it cannot be communal, in any way, is a complete denunciation of collective memory and its representations and therefore is in direct conflict with the entire premise of this dissertation, that is, that William Kentridge's filmic series, *Drawings for Projection* is an aesthetic representation of individual and collective memories.

The study of collective, public or cultural memory has also led scholars back to the work of Sigmund Freud, such as Peter Burke, Cathy Caruth, Jenny Edkins and Dominick LaCapra; and thence to the study of forgetting, and the psychology and sociology and history of amnesia (Burke 2007:12; Caruth 1996; Edkins 2003; LaCapra 1983). Within these studies are references to the concept of "trauma", which is fundamental to the thesis of this dissertation.

3.5.4 Trauma

Traumata have several defining or significant traits: they are defined by Cathy Caruth as "overwhelming" and "catastrophic" (1996:11; cf. Žižek 1991²⁸). Their nature precludes immediate comprehension or rational assimilation; they are elicited by associations or connotations (causing disruption in the present); traumatic memories

²⁷ Anyone wanting to pursue this line of argument is directed to: Sherry, DF & Schacter, DL. 1987. The evolution of multiple memory systems. *Psychological Review* 94:439-454.

²⁸ Slavoj Žižek writes in his book, *For they know not what they do: Enjoyment as a Political Factor*:

The essence of the trauma is precisely that it is too horrible to be remembered, to be integrated into our symbolic universe. All we have to do is to mark repeatedly the trauma as such (1991:272-273).

recur, repetitively and return with the same initial shock with each repeat reiteration (Caruth 1996; Crownshaw 1998; Edkins 2003; Freud 1915 / 1991a; Žižek 1991). Vincent Engel adds that traumata can seem: “unimaginable, incommunicable, and unspeakable” (cited in Lavenne, Renard and Tollet 2005:8). This section now centres on a collection of essays on trauma studies edited by Michael Lambek and Paul Antze (1996) which is referenced in *Chapter 5* of this thesis. It has been lauded by some scholars and criticised by others and as it makes such a substantial contribution to this study it bears a closer look.

The book *Tense Past: Cultural Essays in Trauma and Memory*, deals with the cultural significance of contemporary traumatic memories of the Vietnam War, the Holocaust and with sexually abused children in North America (1996). Although their book, a collection of essays, has contributed significantly to the field of trauma studies, there are, however, several concerns with their work. Lambek and Antze begin by premising their essays on the following premise: “memory is never simply recalled, but reconstructed” (1996:6). Furthermore, by referencing Michel Foucault they argue that memories are always culturally mediated – dictated to by what is desirable to remember in this present. In this way then, memory is always linked to discourse. Robin Crownshaw argues that the main problem with this collection is that the contributing authors, including Antze and Lambek, do not offer a theorisation of trauma or the way traumas are structured; how the past is narrated and remembered; and how trauma often manifests itself subliminally in other historical narratives. Crownshaw also argues that Michael Lambek does not successfully theorise how memory is culturally mediated and gives the impression that trauma is more genetic than cultural (1998). However, Robin Crownshaw does concede that

their essays provide a noteworthy and complementary reading of the cultural significance of trauma, despite the absence of a comprehensive theorisation of trauma (1998). Tina Papoulis sees this absence of a theorisation of trauma in *Tense Past* somewhat differently, describing it as “an exciting interdisciplinary approach to the study of memory as a cultural object” and as possessing “an impressive range of material and originality” (1998:241; 1998:243). She rightly points out that these authors purposefully move away from a macro-historical approach and Paul Antze and Michael Lambek clearly demarcate these parameters in their introduction (1998:241). They indeed emphasise a plurality of discourses, locating memory within an intersection of individual and collective narratives that are intertwined with institutional, political, cultural and social formations (Antze and Lambek 1996). However, Papoulis agrees with Crownshaw on a very salient criticism: the uncritical comparative analysis between ‘western’ and ‘non-western’ with the Eastern cultures presented by Lambek as being homogenised with a “pre-existent collective memory” which he fails to adequately explain (1998:243 and 1998:410). Despite these criticisms, this thesis uses their definition and explication of culturally mediated trauma and applies it to Kentridge’s films (see *Chapter Five*).

3.6 Conclusion

In concluding then, the historical veracity of memory of the narratives and real, or lived experience, is not to be explored here. It is, however, acknowledged that there are problematics between history and memory, as the section on postmodern historian Hayden White attests to. It is also not the aim of this dissertation to interrogate the problematics of psychoanalysis, post-structuralism and postmodernism. For instance, this is not a re-assessment of these perspectives in

relation to contemporary debates, but rather employs theories about memory and trauma as favoured by a particular group of theorists. For purposes of this thesis it is enough simply to take cognisance of them and to reflect upon them. These theories present understandings and explanations of the social and cultural material to be explored by the thesis.

The next chapter looks at the methodology used in this study.

CHAPTER FOUR: A METHODOLOGY OF MEMORY

As indicated in *Chapter One* of this dissertation, this study uses a qualitative method as its research methodology. The objectives of the research are: hermeneutic; exploratory; explanatory; and descriptive. In this chapter, the qualitative research methodology used in this research is briefly discussed and then explained in terms of its application within this investigation of the animated films of William Kentridge. There is an emphasis on a descriptive analysis of the textual-visual material being studied, in this case William Kentridge's animated *Drawings for Projection* film series; as well as peripheral material such as his still lifes, plays and sculptures¹.

4.1 The qualitative paradigm

Qualitative research methodology is defined by Cressell as an investigation process of understanding founded on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explores a cultural, social or human problem (1994). There are several reasons that make qualitative research an ideal methodological tool for this study: it includes context as an indispensable component of the research; it address the researcher's process of self-reflection and self-awareness; and it provides methodological possibilities to address questions that cannot be answered using quantitative research. With regard to this study, the problem in question is a human one, that of the representation of traumatic memories as experienced by William Kentridge, and South Africans during the brutal apartheid regime.

¹ Please see *Chapter One* and *Chapter Two* for a list of William Kentridge's artistic works.

Therefore, the context, in this case, South Africa and its history, is paramount to understanding Kentridge's works.

The manner in which a research study is conducted within a qualitative research design is dependent on two central tenets. Firstly, the needs of the study and secondly, the questions that it seeks to answer. Hence "(t)he problem under investigation properly dictates the methods of investigation as well as the research design" (Bryman 1984:106; cf. Becker in Jessor 1996; Jensen 1982).

With regard to the first tenet, the needs of the study, the literature review (*Chapter Two*) on William Kentridge has clearly indicated an absence with regard to an understanding of his works within the relatively new discourse on memory and trauma. *Chapter Two*, which reviews the works that have analysed Kentridge's films, has highlighted that there is indeed a gap. Most of the literature has revealed that: his work has been analysed within an art history discourse; several post graduate studies, including several doctoral studies, have not focussed on his films as an entire and complete series; and, lastly, none of the analyses have focussed on memory and trauma studies. For instance, the literature review revealed that many studies have focused on Kentridge's works by drawing extensively on much of the same literature to interpret his work, such as that of Walter Benjamin, Michel Foucault and Theodor Adorno. Kentridge himself refers to these sources himself very frequently to add commentary to his own works. No one thus far has interpreted Kentridge's works using Marianne Hirsch's concept of postmemory; Pierre Nora's concept of "sites of memory"; James E. Young's

concept of “counter-memory”; Henri Raczymow’s “memory shot through with holes”; Sigmund Freud’s concept of “screen memories”; or Maurice Halbwachs concept of “collective memory”. There have been no comparative analyses between art Spiegelman (*sic*), Pascal Croci or Joe Kubert. Thus it can be inferred that this study is founded on the fact that there is undoubtedly a lack of a theoretical framework from which to analyse and critique the themes found within Kentridge’s films.

With regard to the second central tenet upon which a qualitative research design is dependent, that is, the questions that it seeks to answer, this thesis addresses the following research problem: Does William Kentridge’s animated *Drawings for Projection* filmic series represent memory / memories? This central research question can be divided into the sub-problems: How does William Kentridge’s animated series represent memories (his own and others)? Whose memories does he represent? Why, if at all, does he portray memories in this particular filmic series? Do his animated films represent a specific South African political socio-historical period of time? Can Kentridge’s films be considered an “authentic” form of documenting South African history? These questions have therefore informed this study’s choice of a hermeneutic approach.

4.2 Qualitative methods

One of the methods of inquiry that has been used is that of deconstruction: it is an approach that is not logocentric but rather decentring, in other words, the readings that occur and the meanings that arise, are neither a reproduction of the work

under analysis nor are they a mere repetition. Deconstruction is the reading of the text, in this case the “text” is Kentridge’s animated films. These readings, of the text, occur between the space of the difference, or the in-between-ness of object and subject; interpreter and interpreted. This post-structural technique is an interpretation or reading that is constantly in process. These interpretations are neither fixed nor authoritative. Post-structuralism acknowledges the multiplicity of meanings within a socio-political world; is self-reflexive; and offers a critique of the theories used to analyse the text, as well as the text itself (see *Chapter Three* for an explanation of this).

4.3 The researcher’s role

Qualitative research studies have been criticised for two main reasons. Firstly, because of the subjective role of the researcher in the data gathering process. Secondly, for the reliance on intuitive knowledge, rather than on authoritative knowledge. With regard to the former criticism, the researcher’s subjective role, this study acknowledges the subjective nature in the choice of data and in the data gathering process. In its defence though, the topic was selected for investigation because of the socio-political milieu in which it was situated, one which this researcher inhabited and therefore it has made a “participant observer” of the researcher in this study (Gray 2003:17). Therefore, any distortion that this researcher has introduced into this study is minimal and did not have a detrimental effect. The researcher has also been reflective of the study.

However, with regard to the reliance on intuitive knowledge, this researcher has attempted to overcome this through the referencing and sourcing of a wide and extensive range of contemporary publications and authors.

This researcher also acknowledges that the personal perspectives as adopted within this study, that is, a refusal of: “grand” / “master narratives” concerning “truth”, “values” and “objectivity”; and totalising theories, is based on the researcher’s own personal values and worldviews. This has meant a very subjective selection of source material that lends itself to supporting this worldview, although it has been lent credibility by the fact that this is the artist’s worldview too. *Chapter Three*, the theoretical literature review, includes commentary by the artist to support this perspective.

4.4 Data collection

The research hypothesis and research issue for this dissertation is the exploration and explanation of the *how* and the *why* of the portrayal / representation of memory in the charcoal, hand-drawn, animated film series of William Kentridge: *Drawings for Projection*. The collection of data in this study is therefore selective / purposive. It included a multitude of both primary and secondary sources. While qualitative researchers focus on primary sources, such as the texts / case studies / situations themselves they must also refer to, and study, secondary sources (Fortner and Christians 1981). It is the responsibility of the researcher to both engage with and evaluate them, as well as to weigh their importance or contribution / s to the field, and then, either reconstruct or reject them (Christians

and Carey; Fortner and Christians 1981; Ragin 1994). In this study the primary sources selected as the texts to be analysed are the filmic series in their entirety². The secondary sources have been provided as literature reviews: one dealing with the sources analysing Kentridge's films such as art reviews and critics, as well as post-graduate studies. The second literature review has provided an overview of the relevant literature as it was used as an interpretative tool, such as psychoanalysis, post-structuralism, postmodernism and studies on memory.

4.5 Sampling methods

Theoretical sampling was used as a research technique. Glaser and Strauss (1967) describe this research process as: the selecting of new research areas and comparing them with existing research areas. For this study different theories (for example theories that dealt with historical trauma, memory trauma, memory, and identity) were used to explicate the latent meanings of Kentridge's visual texts. Artistic sources of a comparable and similar nature were also selected (artists whose works dealt with the representation of the Holocaust, for example art spiegelman (*sic*)). These different comparative analyses investigated topics like the definition and discussion of concepts such as traumatic memory and their depiction in artistic works. Different meanings and interpretations were elicited through the application of complex conceptual and theoretical sources, with specific reference to seminal works, such as those mentioned as primary sources (for instance,

² Please see *Chapter One* for a list of all the primary sources that were initially interrogated before the series was selected as the primary focus of analysis for this research.

Sigmund Freud and Roland Barthes) and supporting sources such as art reviews and newspaper reports.

4.6 Data analysis

After watching the films at the Durban film festival in 1994, the researcher bought the films whenever a new film was produced. The stylistic and thematic readings included viewing the films in their entirety, several times. Particular attention was paid to the depictions of violence and trauma and domestic scenes involving either Soho Eckstein or Felix Teitlebaum. In some cases both appeared in scenes simultaneously, before they morphed into one persona, named Soho / Felix in order to indicate their morphing. This was done for this particular study to separate in time and space the three different characters, Soho Eckstein, Felix Teitlebaum and Soho / Felix. "Soho" was placed before "Felix" in their combined name for this study (in the sixth film) because while Felix Teitlebaum was always featured naked, the newly morphed character retained the outward appearance of Soho Eckstein, that is, his pinstriped suit, and his cigars. Soho / Felix however retained the artist's own very distinct physical features. Soho was also placed first because the united character was very much still the exploitative capitalist and wealthy landowner, who over time began to question his capitalistic enterprises and accumulation of expensive *obets d'arts*. Felix was added second to Soho, because of the ethical and moral concerns that the character Felix Teitlebaum was imbued with, which he seemed to have imparted to the morphed, singular persona Soho / Felix.

The animated films were described in detail, as a written form. A textual reading in terms of identifying their thematic content, including recurring motifs, was the first reading. This reading or deconstruction including reading of not only the art reviews at the time of their release, and attending the installations, it also included attending other art exhibitions that Kentridge was exhibiting at the time, that were not related directly to the filmic series (such as *Black Box / Chambre Noir*, *7 Fragments for George Méliès*; *Woyzeck on the Highveld* and *Ubu and the Truth Commission*). It also meant paying special attention to the political events happening in South Africa and internationally. All of this has bearing on his films.

Bernard Glaser and Anselm L. Strauss exalt their qualitative slogan “[m]aximise the comparisons” (1967:436-445). One of the main goals of qualitative research is “meaning-specific insight through continuing comparative analysis” (Christians and Carey 1981:357). Constructing correlations; highlighting contrasts; connecting histories; and comparing actualities with other similar types are extremely significant. With regard to this study, comparative analysis was carried out between different artistic mediums and their representations of human suffering and tragedy. From photography to literary works, these comparisons were included to emphasise the importance of these artistic forms and their role in perpetuating memories and lived experiences. They also provided further credibility to this researcher’s interpretations of William Kentridge’s filmic works. In addition to this, they sustain the clarification of certain features and concepts used to extricate meaning from Kentridge’s animated films. This is particularly apparent in *Chapter Seven: Questions of Memory, Representation and Aesthetics*.

The purpose of data analysis is ultimately to make sense of the accumulated data / sources. Images were scanned in of photographs, drawings, and screen shots. This data was organised according to the various embedded themes being analysed and where they were relevant as supporting evidence of the interpretations being made. Detailed descriptions were added where necessary to supplement the visual data. Comparisons were made between different data sources. For example, a comparative analysis was carried out between data sources that supported the themes found in artistic representations of Kentridge's portrayals of the apartheid era and those themes embedded in artistic representations of the Holocaust (see *Chapter Seven* for this comparison). Similar identified patterns and recurring themes and concepts were categorised and analysed together, such as the concepts of postmemory or generational guilt and artistic depictions of these concepts (also see *Chapter Five* and *Chapter Seven*). The data was re-presented in terms of relevant summaries, selected quotations and relevant images. With regard to the time frame of this investigation, the primary cases being studied (namely the animated films that make up Kentridge's *Drawings for Projection* series) demarcate the starting point of 1989 with the first film of this series. Whilst the primary case ends in 2003, with *Tide Table* being the last film made, this study included references to the artist's other works from 1989 until 2011. The selection of the sample to be positioned as the primary case, the *Drawings for Projection* series, was selected as a purposive sample. It is considered to be very specific because it has a distinct beginning, middle and end, and follows a close-ended narrative structure (1989—2003). The series is also

representative of the artist's overall body of work in that his choice of medium and style is distinctive throughout his *oeuvre*. It is also very specifically contextualised within the socio-political, cultural-historical period of South Africa. According to Christians and Carey: "[e]very occasion has a historically singular situation that gives it uniqueness" (1981:353). Beginning in 1989 at the very height of apartheid, the series follows the protagonists (Soho Eckstein / Felix Teitlebaum / Soho / Felix) through their personal history / journey, a journey that clearly coincides with and chronicles the history of South Africa. For instance, William Kentridge's works are representative of historical traumas. There are no limitations along spacio-temporal lines — it could be Rwanda, Bosnia, or Darfur:

In his 1999 film *Stereoscope* he uses images of police beating students in Jakarta, riots outside banks in Moscow, rebels being thrown over a bridge and then shot in the river below in Kinshasa, someone throwing rubble at the US embassy in Nairobi: all drawn from television broadcasts and newspapers appearing while he was working on the film (Stewart 2006:14).

Kentridge himself has commented on this film stating "of course the images are all of Johannesburg" (cited in Stewart 2006:14). Another example would be the correlation between his film *History of the Main Complaint* and the establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, in 1996 (please see *Chapter Eight* for more details on this).

Finally, select concepts were described in detail and then applied directly to Kentridge's films in order to explicate the latent meanings within. For instance, see *Chapter Five* for the elucidation of Sigmund Freud's "screen memories" and then their application to Kentridge's films; *Chapter Eight* for the discussion of Hayden White's "anti-narrative non-stories" and their application; or the explanation of

James E. Young's concept of "counter-memory" and its application to the film *Monument* found in *Chapter Nine*. The data analysis in this study is therefore both comparative and interpretative.

4.7 The narrative or pilot study results

Prior to this doctoral study two "pilot studies" were undertaken, that is, two seminars on William Kentridge's *Drawings for Projection* series were presented by this researcher. One was presented at a departmental (Communication Science) seminar in 2004³, at the University of South Africa; and one was presented at the international SACOMM⁴ (South African Communication Association) conference in Stellenbosch in 2006. While both were well received, in retrospect there was a fundamental flaw in the analysis, that is, there was no theoretical framework established or adhered to. The presentations were mostly descriptive in nature and simply highlighted the themes or motifs found within Kentridge's cinematic *oeuvre*, although considerable attention was given to the socio-political context in which they were made. However, they were a relevant research project, if seen as the embryonic foundation for the development of a theoretical framework with which to analyse and interpret his films. Most importantly they emphasised the importance of a deconstructive method of inquiry and they emphasised the need for a theoretical framework with which to critique Kentridge's films.

³ *Celebrating William Kentridge's "Drawings for Projection Series"*. Unisa.

⁴ *A postmodern analysis of William Kentridge's animated films*. SACOMM Conference, Stellenbosch (September, 2006).

4.8 Limitations

The field of qualitative research is often described as being limited by studies that yield only impressionable data or circumstantial evidence, studies that breach statistical procedures and rules in order to assure representativeness (Christians and Carey 1981:357; cf. Fortner and Christians 1981; Ragin 1994). The challenge of this research design methodology as applied in this dissertation is mostly one of over-generalisation. The other limitation is that the sampling method was purposive. William Kentridge is a prolific artist working in artistic mediums of sculpture (bronze, paper, iron), plays, operas, still lifes, etchings, prints, and tapestries, to mention a few. However, it is the animated film series *Drawings for Projection* that was selected as the primary sample to be studied because, as previously stated, it is highly representative of his *oeuvre*. It is also the only series that directly correlates to specific events unfolding in South Africa at the time of creation. Whilst his other artistic works are “political” in nature, such his opera *The Magic Flute*, which deals with post-colonialism, they do not deal specifically with events in South Africa. *The Magic Flute*, for example is an indictment of and commentary on the concept of post-colonialism in general. Even though Kentridge’s other works have been referred to, the series is clearly demarcated and only allows for brief comparisons and references to his other artistic works.

4.9 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the qualitative research approach that was employed for this doctoral study. It has justified why a qualitative and not a quantitative research

methodology was most suitable. It also discussed the researcher's role; data collection and analysis; and limitations of the study.

This study now focuses on the scholarly work on memory studies.

CHAPTER FIVE: MEMORY

As indicated in *Chapter Three* of this thesis there are many different ways of defining memory, “individual” and “collective”, being just two such ways. This chapter looks in detail at many of the concepts already mentioned in *Chapter Three* but discusses them in greater depth and then applies them to Kentridge’s films. These include: postmemory; rememberings; identity; and screen memories.

Elie Wiesel’s seminal memoir *Night* (1960) recounts the horrors that he was subjected to during the Holocaust: from his internment at Auschwitz III Monowitz, to his liberation. Wiesel’s long-time friend, François Mauriac, a Frenchman, Catholic and resistance fighter, encouraged him to write his autobiography. Wiesel did so, but many years later, because like so many other survivors he was caught up in a conspiracy of silence. Some survivors thought that no-one was really interested in their stories; some thought that no-one would believe them, some were ashamed of what they endured, and most found it difficult to find the correct language and medium to relate their experiences (Antze 1996). Elie Wiesel himself has written much on this topic, and in an article for the *New York Times*, entitled *Art and the Holocaust: Trivialising Memory* he includes the story of a young Jewish survivor who was told by a *Schutzstaffel*¹ officer:

[O]ne day you will speak of all this, but your story will fall on deaf ears. Some will mock you, others will try to redeem themselves through you. You will cry out to the heavens and they will refuse to listen or to believe. ... You

¹ This is often abbreviated as “SS”: this was the name of Adolf Hitler’s personal bodyguards which was represented by the signature silver deaths’ head badge.

will possess the truth, but it will be the truth of a madman (cited in Wiesel 1989:1).

It is ironic then that the memoir's popularity and importance have only recently taken off (Oprah 2006; 2008). *Night* is a haunting read, and a necessary one, as it is an eye-witness account and therefore a testimony of the acts of horror perpetrated during the Nazi regime: "[R]emembering is bearing testimony, breaking the conspiracy of silence" (Antze 1996:10). Lest the world forget, of course.

What is quite exceptional though, and highly relevant to this study, are the comments made by François Mauriac in the forward to the first edition of the book (1960). In this foreword, he recounts the following: a young Israeli journalist came to interview him. The journalist asked him about his experiences during the war. Mauriac confided to the journalist

that nothing I had seen during those sombre years had left so deep a mark upon me as those trainloads of Jewish children standing at Austerlitz station (1960:7).

These children were a special convoy of innocent victims to be taken to the death camps during the Holocaust to be gassed. Mauriac then remarkably states: "[Y]et I did not see them myself. My wife described them to me, her voice filled with horror" (1960:7). Mauriac added: "[I]t is not always the events we have been directly involved in that affect us the most" (1960:7). This empathy, this remembering of another's memory so acutely, this transferring from a first-hand account to a second-hand account — this memory is as traumatic an account as if it had been an eye-witness account. It is *this very type of remembering* that

epitomises and explains William Kentridge's works. These "memories" are depicted most evidently in his hand-drawn, charcoal-medium, animated film series *Drawings for Projection*. His "memories" of: the atrocities of the apartheid era; the Herero genocide perpetrated by German colonisers in Namibia (the first genocidal act in modern history); the annihilation of the Lithuanian Jews by the Nazis in World War II; black South African miners working in unforgivably harsh circumstances; slaves and their living conditions in the slave ships leaving for the Americas; individuals who suffered from apartheid directly (through poverty and death) and indirectly (through marginalisation); colonisers raping the African landscapes and peoples. These "memories" permeate his body of works: he tells and re-tells these "memories" of his in a unique and exceptional way. Not only do his works portray these remembrances but the way in which he does so depicts the concept of memory itself. Through his technique of incomplete erasure he reveals the continuing effect that the past has on the present. His work physically uncovers layers of reality — the supposedly dominant and "official" present and the unsuccessfully erased past. In other words he draws memory itself. He depicts both the physical landscapes of South Africa — which are the most visible reminders of history as well as constituting the actualities of place — and the fluid and ever changing landscapes of the human mind (being, the unconscious, and memory). He does this through the flowing / ephemeral nature / process of his work, which in turn is a representation of memory and being. Staci Boris has written that the source and "pivotal motif" of Kentridge's film, *Felix in Exile*, "was a friend's description of police forensic photographs of murder victims" (Boris 2001:35). As a result, his "vizualisations of these bodies" scattered in the veld

“stayed with him”, becoming the very images of murdered individuals covered in newspapers lying in the landscape (Boris 2001:35; *Figure 3.1*). This is a direct example of Kentridge’s rememberingings being that of another, made concrete in his works. (An extra layer or sediment added to this is that his friend did not see the actual bodies himself — he only viewed the photographs.) Kentridge’s films and other artistic endeavours are memories of others’ memories, as well as his own memories. These rememberingings, and the concept of “memory”, and their importance in Kentridge’s artistic creations, need to be expanded upon, and it is to this that this chapter now turns its attention.

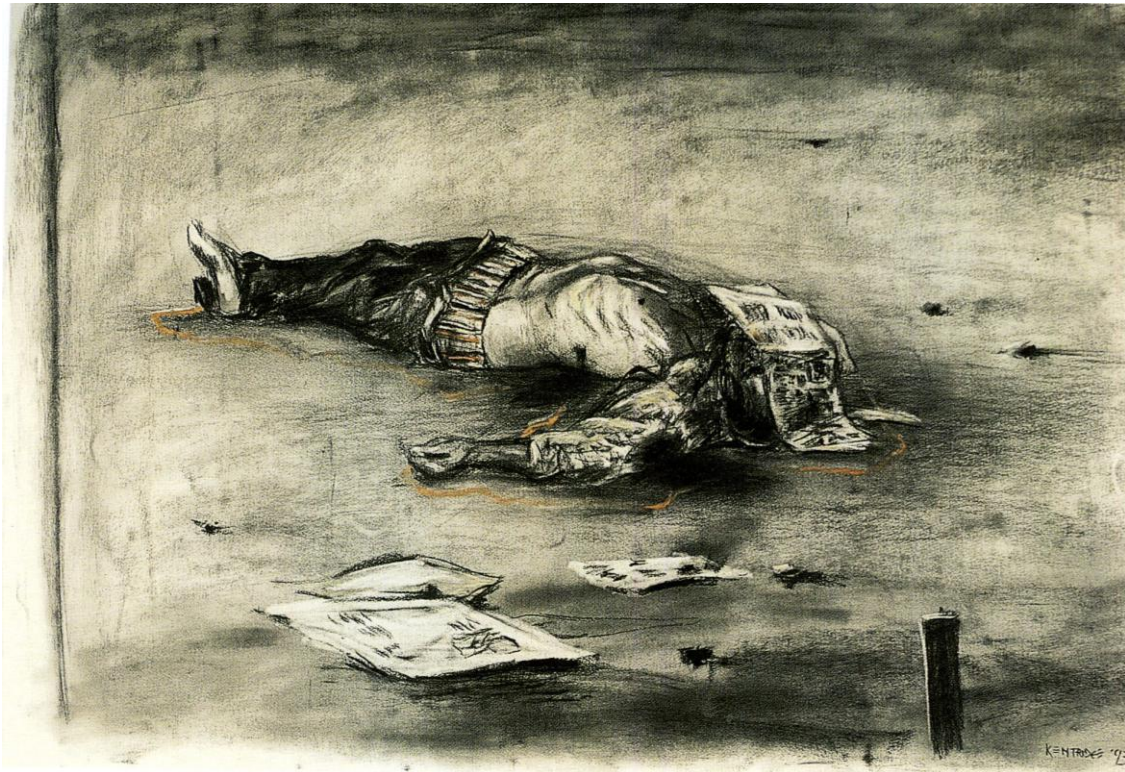


Figure 5.1 Drawing from *Felix in Exile* (Benezra, Boris, Cooke, Sitas and Cameron 2001: 98).

5.1 Memories and rememberings

In Kentridge's animated works one sees evidence of his rubbings out — the traces (smudges of charcoal) that are left behind after the still is altered — which gives a 'jerkiness to his films as well as a realism and an unpolished feeling — a roughness (*Figure 5.2* and *Figure 5.3*). Roland Barthes defines viewing a single frame of film as observing "the trace of the absence of time" (Wyver 1989:110). This particularly applies to Kentridge's work because traces of charcoal are left once erased. These faint traces tell of a different image and therefore a different meaning and of course a different memory. Kentridge's works are his "fascination with life's haphazard and poignant impermanence" (Stone 2003:52).



Figure 5.2 Drawing from *Felix in Exile* (Benezra, Boris, Cooke, Sitas and Cameron 2001:100).

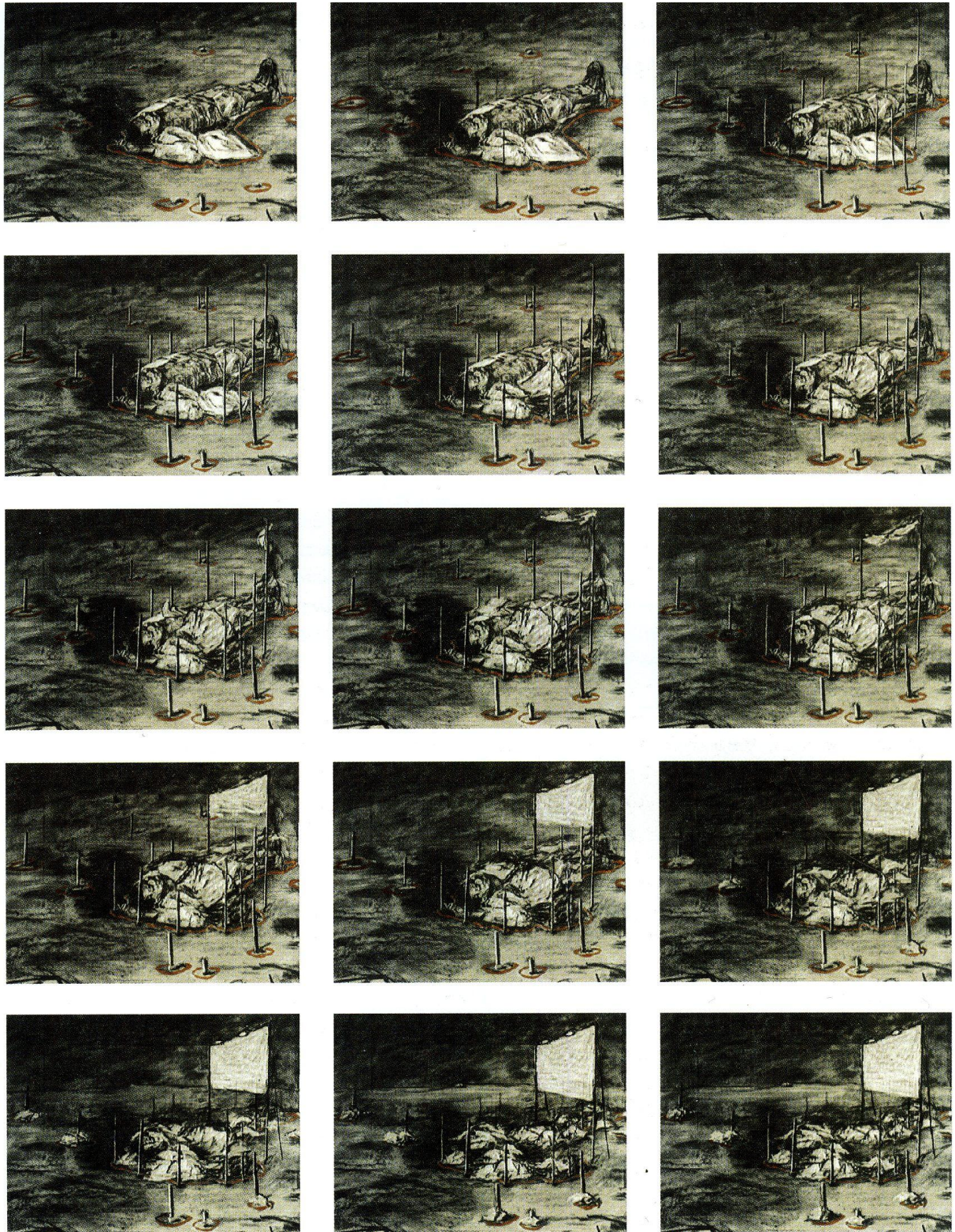


Figure 5.3 Drawing from *Felix in Exile* (Benezra, Boris, Cooke, Sitas and Cameron 2001:28).

Marshall Deutelbaum (1989) also emphasises the humanising power of visual memory — which, to reiterate, is inherent in Kentridge's work — as he highlights the importance of remembering our apartheid history and other histories. Kentridge's theme of memory raises the question: are those who do not remember history condemned to repeat it? "Kentridge's drawings betray the traces of his making erasures with a history of purpose, the purpose of not forgetting" (Stone 2003:67). Kentridge's technique of incomplete erasure (his physical and artistic technique) physically illustrates the fragility of human memory, not simply for the sake of its own beauty, but for the purpose of depicting socio-political issues as precisely and effectively as possible. As Laurence Kirmeyer aptly puts it, there is always: "[T]he frailty and impersistence of memory" to take into account (1996:174).

With regard to tenuous memories, there is the example of when Kentridge as a child of six went to look at photographs in his father's study. The photographs were of individuals killed in Sharpeville (Christov-Bakargiev 1998:28; Oppelt 1999:6). That this memory and shock at seeing those photographs is evident now in his work is obvious. However far removed he was from Sharpeville, these images still had a personal effect. It also highlighted for Kentridge that there was a life outside of his safe family domain, a life that was very different to his own. Psychoanalysis has specifically emphasised that "we cannot separate a person's psychology from his or her personal history" (Sarup 1988:8). This is true of Kentridge — his experiences of growing up in an anti-apartheid activist home have had an effect on his psyche. He was obviously very aware of the difference

between his life and the lives of those living directly under apartheid. Kentridge himself puts it thus: “I went through life knowing that outrageous things were happening in an abnormal society” (Kentridge cited in Christov-Bakargiev 1998:13). This is an example of the balance / interaction between the personal and the national in his films, highly relevant especially given the embryonic and fragmentary nature of South African national identity. This is particularly evident in his film *Stereoscope*, where Soho/Felix has morphed into one character — with Felix Teitlebaum representing the collective and Soho Eckstein representing the individual (henceforth referred to as Soho/Felix). Even so, the screen is split into two “identical” images of a brooding Soho/Felix (see *Figure 5.4* and *5.5*). He is obviously thinking of his past and considering his future. His work engages a question (among many): if a coherent national perspective is impossible at present, are the only valid South African visions deeply personal ones? Is Kentridge’s vision therefore paradoxically both personal and generally South African?

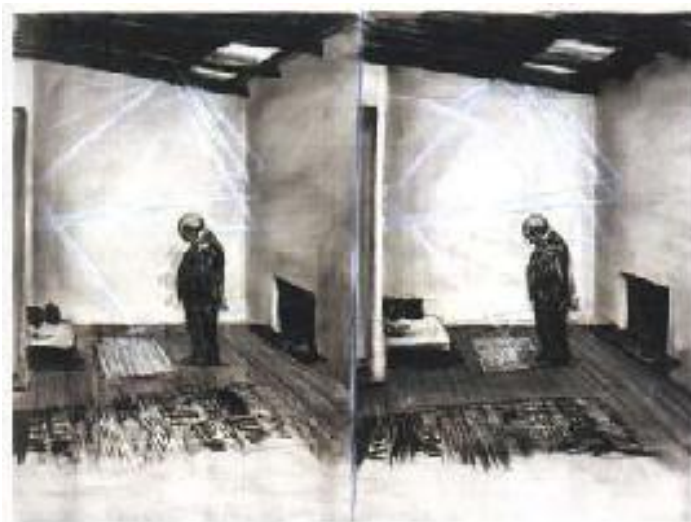


Figure 5.4 Drawing from *Stereoscope* (Alemani 2006:59).



Figure 5.5 Drawing for *Stereoscope* (Benezra, Boris, Cooke, Sitas and Cameron 2001:129).

Artist Lucian Freud writes: “What do I ask of a painting? I ask it to astonish. Disturb, seduce, and convince,” furthermore, “[E]verything is autobiographical, and everything is a portrait. My work is purely autobiographical” (Freud cited in Stone 2003:64). Is this an appropriate description to borrow and extend to Kentridge’s animated works? Consider that the main character Felix Teitlebaum, and later on in the series, his protagonist Soho Eckstein are drawn in the artist’s image?

However, does Lucien Freud not allude to more than a realistically drawn portrait, and rather to the essence of what his work is about — his choice of subject matter, his themes, his topics, his “memories”? As the film maker Stephen Dwoskin (cited in Wyver 1999:110) has suggested, *avant garde* films can be defined as “personal works” which are “individually motivated”. Lucien Freud also posits that

[T]he painter makes real to others his innermost feelings about all that he cares for. ... A painter's tastes must grow out of what so obsesses him in life that he never has to ask himself what it is suitable for him to do in art (Freud 1954:1).

Both Dwoskin and Freud's statements very much apply to Kentridge's works. While the artist William Kentridge in person does not come across as a man obsessed or obsessive in his speech, manner or behaviour (even when watching him at work — he is incredibly self-contained and graceful; seen in the videotape *Drawing the Passing*, 1999), it nevertheless seems quite clear that his “memories” haunt / obsess him. Hence, the recurring themes of guilt, responsibility, injustice; his depictions of slaughter, rape (of the land), death — challenging the audience to “see”, to remember, to react. Lucien Freud also once stated that: “[M]y object in painting pictures is to try and move the senses by giving an intensification of reality” and “where the swiping of a brush leaves a mark on the canvas akin to a deposit of raw tissue” (Freud 1954:1; cf. cited in Stone 2003:33). These are such apt statements in regard to Kentridge's art, it is almost as if Lucien Freud was writing directly about Kentridge's works' and not his own works. Kentridge's art most certainly does “move the senses” simply by choice of subject matter and his extraordinary aesthetics, and his art is the “intensification of reality” — even “more-real-than-real” (Baudrillard cited in Smart 1993). Quite a feat considering that

Kentridge's art is predominantly in charcoal, almost entirely devoid of colour save for the occasional use of blue or red pastel. As for the description "deposit of raw tissue": this brings to mind the idea of an open wound, and is this not the idea behind remembering — keeping the wound open so that one does not forget? Are Kentridge's themes open wounds, that some would rather forget, preferring to banish them to the "past"? Okwui Enwezor is of a similar opinion:

[R]ather than seeking merely to illustrate or describe that world, Kentridge searches for ways to analyse it: to probe it, jab it and scratch at it as if it were a sebaceous node, tumescent flesh bubbling with an abscess about to burst (1998:67).

Kentridge's own technique of making the films is a literal example of "remembering" because the drawings, the changes / erasures will not be forgotten since they are permanently "preserved on celluloid" (Boris 2001:31). Arlene Stone also describes Kentridge's work as "dark memories come alive". This is exactly the case in his animated films — his memories (his own or those of others), because of the medium in which they are expressed, that is, film, do indeed come alive. That they are "dark" is not in dispute, and even though they are hand-drawn in charcoal, they take on a realism that very much makes them "alive" (Stone 2003:84). They are "alive" also in the sense that they remain relevant to contemporary society.

5.2 "Postmemory"

Returning directly to the idea of Kentridge's work portraying his "memories" of others' past injustices and past histories, Marianne Hirsch has identified the concept of "postmemory" which is relevant to the understanding of this idea. Hirsch, in her book entitled *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative and*

Postmemory (1997), analyses the photographs of those who died during the Holocaust. She studies “their existence as spaces of lost memory” (1997:22-23; cf. Hirsch 2003). From this she deduces and introduces the concept of “postmemory” which is different from “memory” by “generational distance” and from history by “deep personal connection”:

[Post]memory is a powerful and very particular form of memory precisely because its connection to its object or source is mediated not through recollection but through imagination...Postmemory characterizes (*sic*) the experience of those who grow up dominated by narratives that preceded their birth, whose own belated stories are evacuated by the stories of the previous generation shaped by traumatic events that can be neither understood nor recreated (Hirsch 1997:22; cf. Hirsch 2003; Hirsch and Kacandes 2004; Sicher 2004).

This “postmemory” is “a spatiotemporal exile from a destroyed past that both distances and affirms the existence of the past” (Hirsch 1997:22-23; 244-245; cf. Hirsch 2003). “Postmemory” therefore basically means an

intersubjective transgenerational space of remembrance, linked to a cultural or collective trauma that is not strictly based on identity or familial connection. It is defined through an identification with the victim or witness, modulated and carefully delimited by the unbridgeable distance that separates the participant from the one born after (Hirsch and Kacandes 2004:14).

This “identification” with a victim or victims, and “imagination / remembrance” of others’ past traumas helps explain why Kentridge has focused on certain themes in his works. He is very empathetic, for example, carefully drawing the subalterns’ faces with their pained lines — to highlight / show the suffering they are going through / have experienced. In *Johannesburg, 2nd Greatest City after Paris* intense erotic scenes between Felix Teitlebaum and Mrs. Eckstein are juxtaposed with the pained and horrifying images of the mine workers’ faces and seemingly non-ending

lines of them stretched windingly across the highveld. Their faces are highly reminiscent of Edvard Munch's *Scream* — evoking the same pain and horror. Obviously, at some level, Kentridge identifies with the voiceless, the poverty-stricken, with “Harry” the hobo, for instance, because he is able to capture and portray their misery so realistically. Consider his film *Monument*, with Harry pinioned to a rock, and the close-ups of Harry's face. That he chooses such a theme (the exploitation of workers) is in itself revealing of his empathy, and this empathy is amplified by how he draws the themes / topics / individuals, and is able to convey their unbearable lives of misery to an audience.

There is a fundamental “connection between memory and imagination, re-telling and re-creating the self” (Kirmayer 1996:174). Kentridge literally does this in his films. His “memories” of others memories, and his own memories are indeed linked to the imagination which he has succeeded in drawing, he tells and re-tells stories of apartheid and he “re-creates” the self through the merging of Soho Eckstein and Felix Teitlebaum. Another second generational Holocaust writer, Henri Raczymow, coined the phrase “*mémoire trouée*” or “memory shot through with holes” — a memory that is a void, a “memory of not remembering and not being there” (Raczymow 1994:101-102; cf. Raczymow 2003; Sicher 2004). Similarly, the German author, W. G. Sebald wrote that when he watched documentary films of War World II, or looked at photographs of the war, he felt as if “those horrors I did not experience cast a shadow over me, and one from which I shall never entirely emerge” — this too is a form of “postmemory” (Sebald 2003:71). Atrocities not experienced first hand, as François Mauriac astutely

observes (above), are “those that affect us the most” (1960:2). Froma I. Zeitlin also believes that writers and artists “represent the past through modes of enactment — even reanimation — through which the self, the ‘ego’, the ‘one who was not there’, now takes on a leading role as an active presence” (Zeitlin 1998:6; cf. Sicher 2004; Zeitlin 2001 and 2004). This is interesting in the light of Kentridge choosing to animate his Felix Teitlebaum and Soho/Felix characters in his own image, thereby taking on an active presence in his films. He puts himself directly into his films and into the themes he portrays, of which he surely does not have direct / immediate experience.

Efraim Sicher suggests another term, that of “absent memory”. Like “postmemory”, it is still made of angst and other post-traumatic stress-related symptoms, memories transferred and experienced as “first-hand” (Sicher 2004). Geoffrey Hartman also adds to these ideas when he coins the phrase “witnesses by adoption” — it enlarges the familial connection of memory – to incorporate others’ empathy and identification (Hartmann 2004; Hirsch and Kacandes 2004:14; cf. Hartmann 2003). It is obvious that Kentridge’s films, by their very themes, identify with the dispossessed and the victims of apartheid. Kentridge’s works “trace unconscious messages from the past” (Stone 2003:99). “Disconsolate and irremediable nostalgia and loss are embedded” in his works (Stone 2003:99). And so, as if tormented by his memories of others’ memories Kentridge takes it upon himself to document these “memories” — with exquisite aesthetics, and haunting and even grotesque subject matter (see *Chapter Seven* for issues concerning aesthetics and representation) in a series of animated films that challenge the

viewer him/herself to acknowledge the past and to remember. Understanding the concept of memory and how it works, with a focus on collective memory, and memory's relationship to trauma, now follows.

5.3 Memory

In *WEIGHING ... and WANTING* it is apparent that Soho Eckstein is “obsessed with memory” (Benezra 2001:25). Soho Eckstein lays his head against different objects, such as a rock, a bakelite telephone and a teacup See *Figure 5.6*, *Figure 5.7*, and *Figure 5.8*). The rock morphs into the land — a reference to Soho Eckstein and his mines — he is troubled by the fortunes he made exploiting the land and the workers. There seems to be an element of remorse captured in his face. This remorse continues as a theme onto the next installation of the chronology of the films, *Stereoscope*. The rock also traces his past, like actual sediments found in the earth. In *Stereoscope*, Soho Eckstein's wealthy empire is demolished, and Soho Eckstein becomes a divided self “as stereoscopic alter egos” (Benezra 2001:25). He appears brooding and melancholic — does he mourn the loss of his empire? Is he questioning his past? Or simply reliving it? He is most certainly preoccupied with his past.

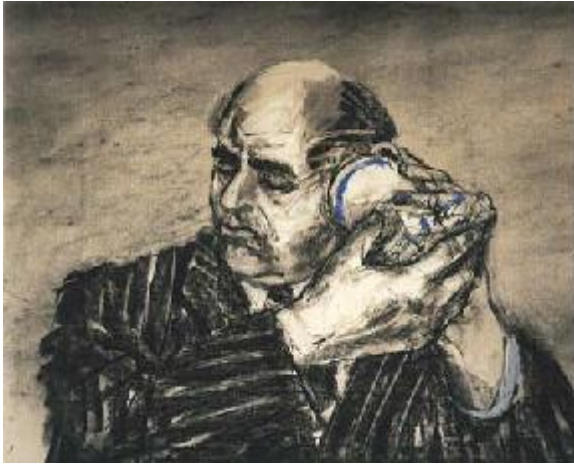


Figure 5.6 Drawing from *WEIGHING ... and WANTING* (Benezra, Boris, Cooke, Sitas and Cameron 2001:123).



Figure 5.7 Drawing from *WEIGHING ... and WANTING* (Benezra, Boris, Cooke, Sitas and Cameron 2001:125).



Figure 5.8 Drawings from *WEIGHING ... and WANTING* as part of installation exhibit (Christov-Bakargiev 1999:73).

With regard to the “past”, Tasmin Spargo very perceptively attempts to define the past:

the past is what happened before the present: it is time that has passed. Thinking in terms of past, present, and future seems natural, inevitable both on a personal level and in broader social, cultural terms. The past is, in a sense, over but in another sense it is only available to us, knowable, as part of the present. The past may be real but it is, by definition, irrecoverable in its pastness (2000:1).

Her definition captures the ephemeral essence of the concept the “past”. W. G. Sebald poetically states: “[S]uch is the dark backward of abysm of time.

Everything lies all jumbled up in it, and when you look down you feel dizzy and afraid” (2003:74). Directly related to the concept of time, is of course, “memory”.

Memory is the edifice of identity, with reference to the individual as well as to the collective, but more recently it has become a “site of struggle” — memory has become politicised (Antze and Lambek 1996:vii). It pervades our current discourses on culture — this “politics of memory” is a site of trauma and victimisation (Antze and Lambek 1996:vii). Memories do more than simply document the past, they “are interpretive reconstructions that bear the imprint of local narrative conventions, cultural assumptions, discursive formations and practices, and social contexts of recall and commemoration” (Antze and Lambek 1996:vii).

When violence is perpetuated against individuals and singled-out groups of people, memories serve to implicate and indict; they also symbolise victimisation and cohesion, and thus are performative in meaning.

The elections in South Africa in 1994 heralded a new era — post-apartheid and democracy — that came with the ideas of reparation and reconciliation. To help heal the wounds of a tragic devastating political past a Commission was set up in 1996 called The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). One of the Commission’s aims was to listen to the testimony of those who had suffered enormously during apartheid, but it also served as a confessional. Those that carried out the atrocities of apartheid were asked to come forward to give evidence

of their involvement. These were the memories of both victims and perpetrators of injustice. The idea was to listen and bear witness and then forgive. South Africa was to heal through this process.

The evidence was horrific and traumatic to hear. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission was covered by every form of the media — broadcast constantly on television and radio. It became what Alemani called a “theatre of cruelty and suffering” (2006:51); or, “Theatre of Violence” (Foster, Haupt and de Beer 2005, this is also the title of their book). The irony of course was that the criminals were to be pardoned while the victims would receive reparation. The problem was that although everyone “knew” about the atrocities committed, no one actually expected the content that came out — hideously grotesque, phantasmagoric — therein lies the irony. As the TRC continued it became very apparent that these criminals should never have been pardoned — their crimes against humanity and their compatriots were heinous. It might have been more healing if prosecutions had taken place, similar to those of the Nuremburg trials / Bosnia trials (this is the researcher’s own opinion).

Kentridge deals with this topic in the play *Ubu and the Truth Commission* (Taylor 1997), directed by Kentridge (and drawings and film by Kentridge). Obviously Taylor’s title is a direct reference to the Commission. The content also deals directly with the TRC. *Ubu and the Truth Commission* is inspired by a play called *Ubu Roi*, written by French playwright Alfred Jarry and performed in 1896. In *Ubu Roi*, Jarry created a character called Ubu. Ubu is a belligerent despot. He is

vulgar. His physical features are hideous and he is fat. He is also stupid. Jarry represents him in all his grotesquery – the play is political satire. Theatrically speaking, Ubu has become the “symbol for the absurdity of power, its thousand different faces and the contradictions inherent in governing” (Alemani 2006:49; see *Figures 5.12 — 5.18*: Kentridge’s drawings of Ubu). In *Ubu and the Truth Commission*, his adventures are taken and mixed with the real-life drama of the TRC.

Jarry’s original play includes paradoxical elements among the irony and satire, and Kentridge shadows this with the way that the “actors” are represented on stage. Real actors are used to portray a fictitious Ubu, while the real witnesses, the victims, are presented as puppets — large wooden puppets produced by the Handspring Puppet Company (see *Figure 5.10*). Of course, adding to the confusion that reflects the socio-political situation of the time is the background animation of the play — creating / adding a further layer of complexity to the dramatic process. The animation consists of documentary footage and drawings of torture.

Both collective and personal memories are represented in the play — Ubu represents the individual, the iconic criminal; while the puppets represent the collective. They both put forward their memories — there is a meeting of the “I” with the collective. Both sets of memories are traumatic to hear — with the perpetrators giving evidence of torture, and the victims describing their loss of loved ones and the hideous suffering inflicted upon them. Ubu (actor Dawid

Minnar) is stupid, supercilious, arrogant and slovenly. The actor wears undergarments and boots — he is repulsive and disgusting (see *Figures 5.9 — 5.11*). The loathsomeness of his actions during the apartheid era is perfectly encapsulated in his physical appearance — it doubles the disgust at hearing the atrocities being recounted. The play challenges the notion of the TRC being about transition and forgiveness. The Commission's unveiling darkness, as represented in the play, presents one with the conundrum — is forgiveness the way to go? Or does the witnessing of memories result in “cohesion” as Antze and Lambek (1996; see above) suggests?



Figure 5.9 Photograph from *Ubu Tells the Truth* (Benezra, Boris, Cooke, Sitas and Cameron 2001:38).

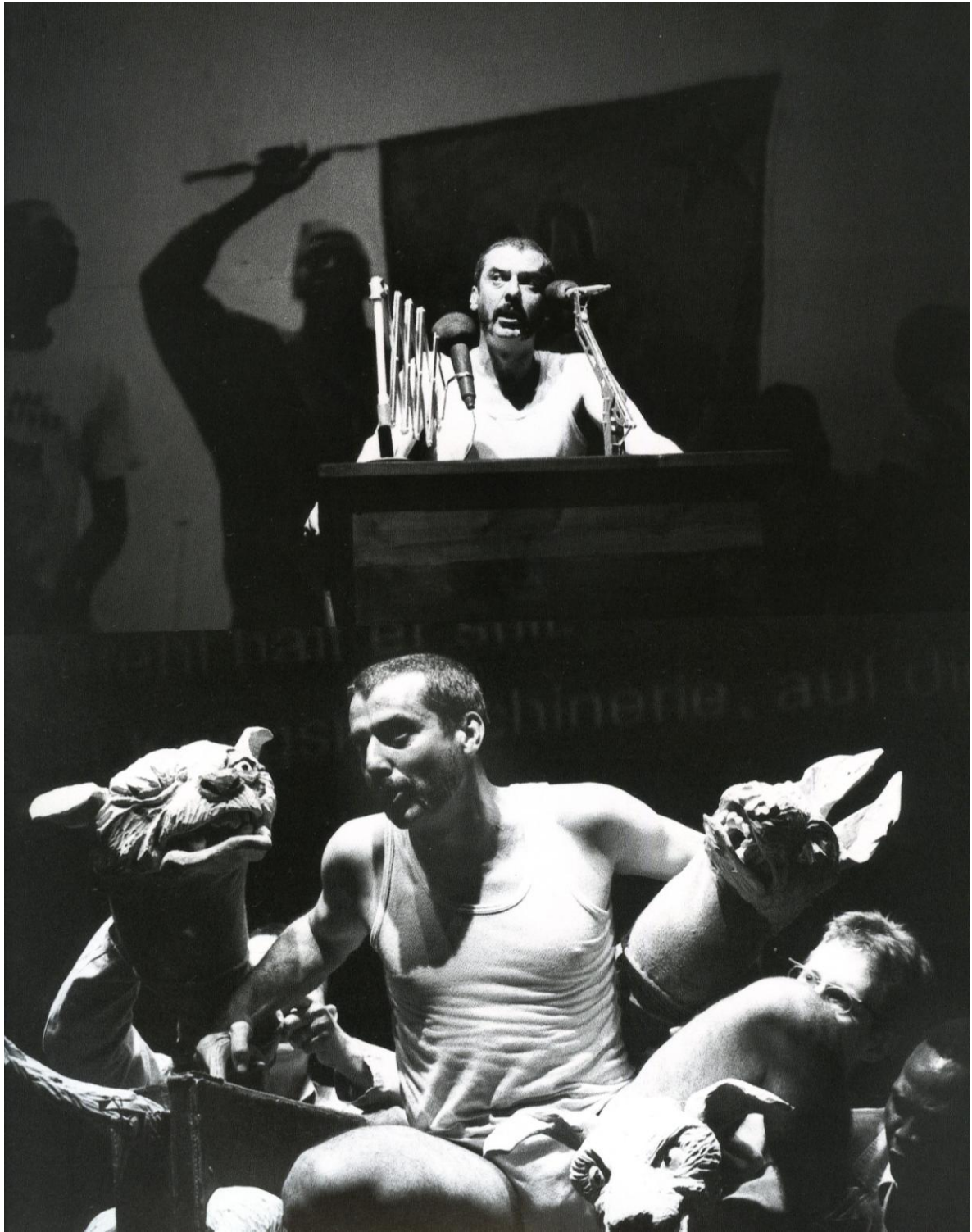


Figure 5.10 Photograph from *Ubu Tells the Truth* (Benezra, Boris, Cooke, Sitas and Cameron 2001:45).



*Figure 5.11 A colour photograph from the play **Ubu and the Truth Commission** (Christov-Bakargiev 1998:117).*



Figure 5.12 William Kentridge's *Dancing Man* 1998 – similar to his drawings of Ubu Roi (Benezra, Boris, Cooke, Sitas and Cameron 2001:121).

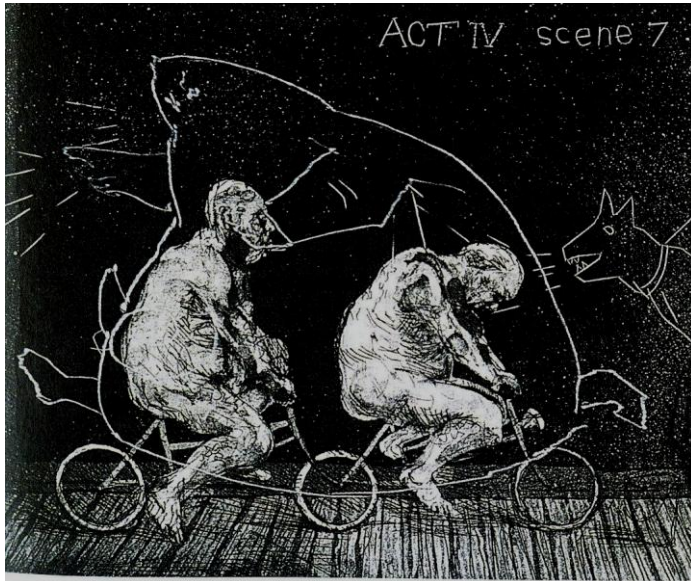


Figure 5.13 *Ubu Tells the Truth: etchings 1996—1997*

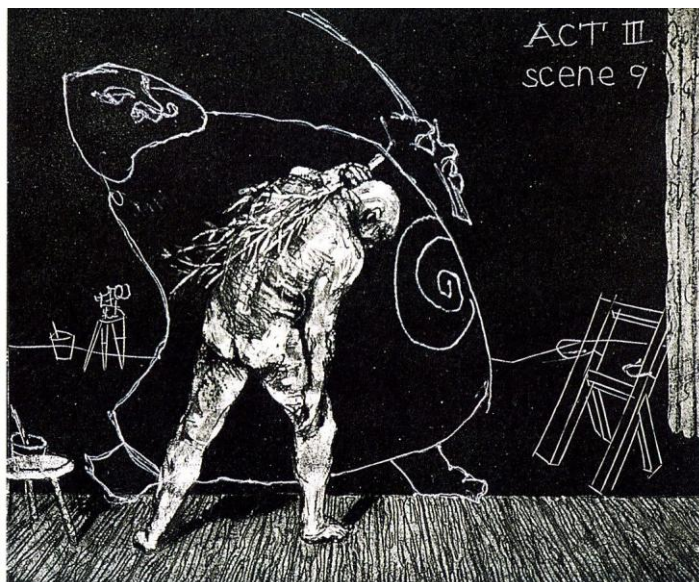


Figure 5.14 *Ubu Tells the Truth: etchings 1996—1997*

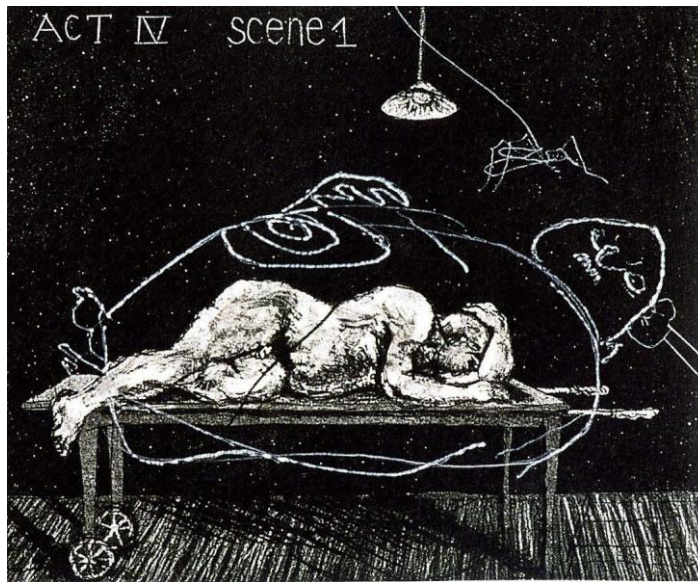


Figure 5.15 Ubu Tells the Truth: etchings 1996—1997

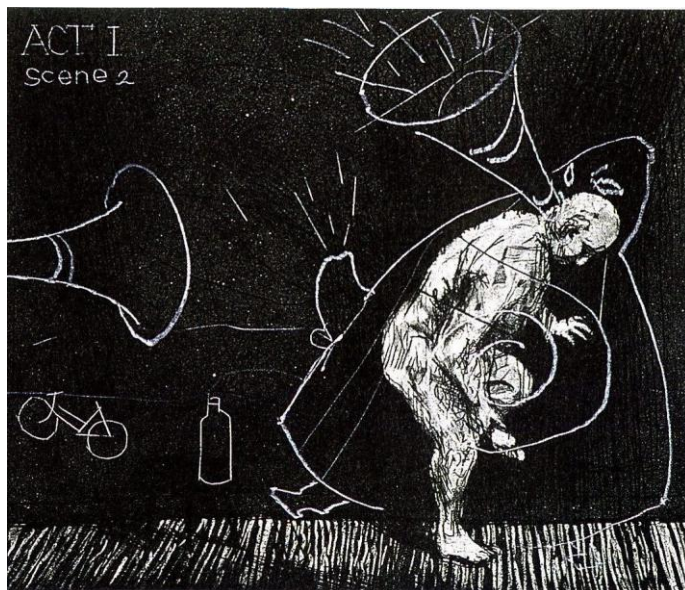


Figure 5.16 Ubu Tells the Truth: etchings 1996—1997

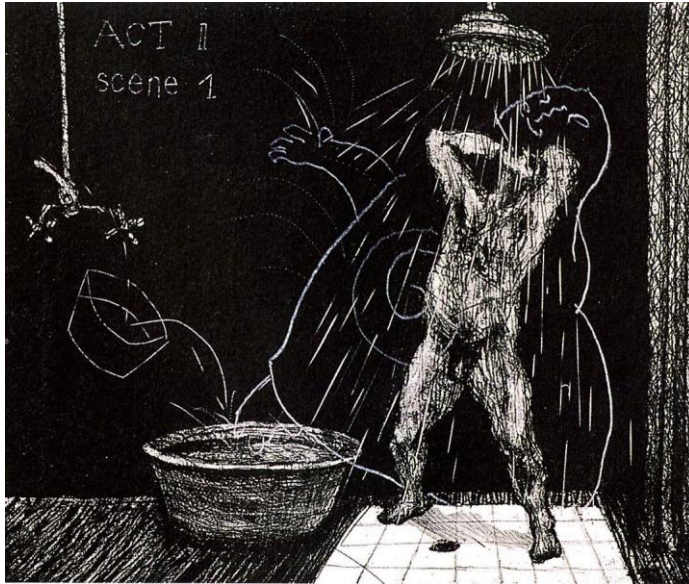


Figure 5.17 Ubu Tells the Truth: etchings 1996—1997

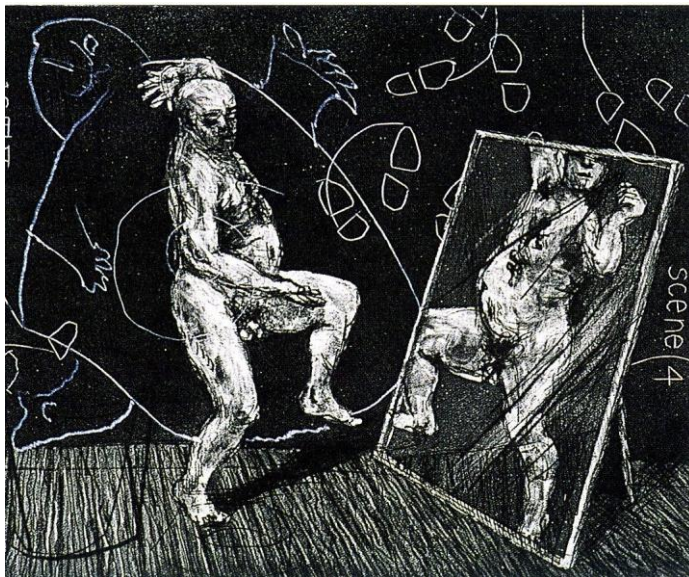


Figure 5.18 Ubu Tells the Truth: etchings 1996—1997

Figure 5.12 — 5.18 Ubu Tells the Truth: etchings 1996—1997 (Benezra, Boris, Cooke, Sitas and Cameron 2001:117-118).

5.4 Memory and identity

It is “access to memory” (Antze and Lambek 1996:xii) that is problematic. Sigmund Freud put forward the “archaeological metaphor” in trying to understand memory: as sediments or layers buried beneath the present, or secreted behind a screen (1899a and 1899b). This is an ideal definition of Kentridge’s works — sediments / layers that contain memories and reveal different realities and meanings. In psychoanalysis the emphasis is on the play between fantasy and reality — memory is embossed upon supple screens that serve at once to conceal as well as to reveal (Freud 1899b / 1962). What one actually remembers are memories — there is no undeviating line to the past — these screens are embossed with both fantasies and distortions of many consecutive remembering — memories of memories. Freud likens memories to dreams in that they are full of concealed symbols (see below).

Memories are made out of different experiences — thus memory is inherently linked to identity (Antze and Lambek 1996:xii). Culture influences and shapes memory. Antze and Lambek cite Terdiman’s 1993 study where he analyses the works of poets Marcel Proust and Charles Baudelaire, concluding that their works are essentially about retrieval and loss: “memory begins when experience itself is definitively past” (1996:xiii). Memory becomes distanced and detached, or as Paul Ricour states: “a dialectic between appropriation and distancing” (1976:43).

Memory, according to Pierre Nora (1989:7-25; cf. Antze and Lambek 1996:xvii), is a “continuous, dialectical movement in and out of consciousness”. Memory

functions as a narrative — creating continuity associations between the past and the present. An authoritative version of this creative narrative rests with the communal and collective memory, supported by the experts. Memories are formed by the existing conventions of one's time, place and position (Nora 1989:7-25; cf. Antze and Lambek 1996:xvii). Memory is centred on an inherent, essential subject, whether this subject is an individuated "I" or a collective "we".

Antze and Lambek (1996:xxi, xxii) believe that nations — coherent, continuous and whole — can be likened to that of the individual. They state that nations need to construct / create a past, that is, a collective memory. They claim that trauma is always a part of that past — whether it is repression or remembrance. The memory of selves is always coupled with social memory and social memory is connected to the personal. The self and the social always interconnect: autobiographical narratives of the self are sustained by social constructs, such as judicial testimonies, patient case histories, journalistic accounts, and so forth. They legitimise the autobiographical self. William Kentridge's films are a search for a way to mourn South Africa's devastating historical past — he looks for ways in which he can mourn the suffering of the entire nation, without being reductionist or simplistic (cf. Alemani 2006:15). Kentridge's animation does often include actual documentary footage — giving authenticity to his drawings / animations / plays, found for example in *Black Box / Chambre Noir*, *Ubu and the Truth Commission*; and *Ubu Tells the Truth*.

“Memory acts in the present to represent the past” (Antze and Lambek 1996:xxiv). Terdiman (1993 cited in Antze and Lambek 1996:xxiv) explains that this representation does not imply a straightforward “retelling” but rather a complex process of “interpretation”. Interestingly, Kentridge’s works by definition are a “retelling” and an “interpretation” — he draws his interpretations of memories of those living in a brutalised country, and he tells certain themes over and over again, in different “interpretations” / drawings.

Forgetting is intrinsic to memory or remembering — identity is choreography between remembering and forgetting. Kentridge referred to the transitional period of politics, between apartheid and democracy in South Africa, as a “contest between amnesia and memory — between paper shredders and photocopying machines” (Benezra 2001:25). This is a direct reference to those who want to shred evidence of the evil deeds of apartheid and those who want to photocopy them for future use, for proof / evidence. Kentridge has his own word for forgetting: “disremembering” (Boris 2001:34). This implies that it is a conscious act to “disremember” that which one does not want in one’s consciousness, and does not want to deal with. Identity is not made up of a cemented set of memories, rather it is a “dialectical, ceaseless activity of remembering and forgetting, assimilating and discarding” (Antze and Lambek 1996:xxix). Memories of past incidences are constantly reinterpreted and reassimilated with the introduction of new knowledge.

Paul Ricoeur (1992; cf. Antze 1996) also claims that our experience of identity has a narrative structure. In his book, *Oneself as Another*, he claims that one can

separate us from others and from the state of being consistent over time through a process he calls “emplotment” (Ricouer 1992). This concept views individuals as constantly “weaving and reweaving of past and present into characters, motives, situations, actions” (Ricouer cited in Antze 1996:6). In other words individuals are the actors in a play that is being continuously retold, and revised, as our lives are lived out. Kentridge does this with both his characters, Soho Eckstein and Felix Teitlebaum. For example, in *Johannesburg, 2nd Greatest City after Paris*, there is the love affair between Felix Teitlebaum and Mrs. Eckstein, and in many episodes, Soho Eckstein is depicted at work. Janice Haaken also advocates that

the emotional truth of the past is never reducible to the concrete facticity of events but is always bound up in interpretation, both in the initial experience of events and in their later elaborations and working through in memory ... (1994:115).

It is not enough to produce a document or report that something has happened — whom it has happened to and how, when and where become important too. Once again, this has been dealt with in *Ubu and then Truth Commission*, which deals with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission that was specifically formed to hear of events endured / perpetrated during the apartheid regime / era. While this theatre production is not part of the *Drawings for Projection* animated series — it offers insight into Kentridge’s themes: the collective and the individual co-existing in a politicised and brutalised society.

Memories arise unexpectedly, not as accounts of the past, but in response to one’s continuous events. Memories inform our everyday present. This is most evident in *History of the Main Complaint* — Soho/Felix is simply out for a drive when he looks

into his rear-view mirror and sees memories / images of past injustices, unnerving him. He is driving his car in the present, he has an accident, and that instant implodes, which gets linked to the past through the images that rise up from the past, infiltrating the present. This also implies an individual and a collective responsibility, in that Soho/Felix represents the individual and the terrifying images of brutality happening “out there”, in society; such as the man being beaten by two other men also depicted in *History of the Main Complaint*. Should he have tried harder to put an end to apartheid? His middle-class guilt is laid bare. Is it possible to separate the two, that is, the individual and the collective? Is this not the basis of Kentridge’s melancholy? Many psychoanalytic theorists do not believe that the past is really past, but rather present in the here and now as the “timeless unconscious” (Antze 1996:10). Jennifer Arlene Stone makes the same point: “the unconscious knows no time” (Stone 2003:111). The author of this dissertation is of the opinion that this is an apt description of Kentridge’s animated films.

The articulation of identity / self is bound by socio-cultural relations of “power” that give precedence to the “reproduction” of specific memories above all others (George 1996:59). In this instance, in the series, Soho Eckstein and Felix Teitlebaum are as well as the symbiotic Soho/Felix’s identities have been bound by the socio-cultural relations of apartheid. In South Africa during the apartheid era the ideology was supported by not only the government, but other state apparatuses as well, such as the education system, the police and the army. Everything worked to inculcate apartheid. It is impossible to think that people were unaffected by this reign of fascism. His works give precedence to these

“memories”. His films also depict socio-cultural relations of power that represent time.

Having studied the beginnings of the science / study of memory, Ian Hacking introduces a new term to this realm of discourse: “memoro politics”. This term replaces the concept of the “soul” with a concept that memory is now constituted by moral and political claims (1996:65). According to his studies, Hacking claims that the concept of the memory has permeated Western thought as being comprised of both the “soul” and “identity” (1996). Introduced into these studies are the revelations of Sigmund Freud’s belief that individuals are significantly molded and formed by what they have forgotten. This ever-present notion is crucial to the idea of “memoro-politics”. Indeed, Soho/Felix’s identity is politically formed. One cannot disassociate them from the politics around them — capitalism, ideology and apartheid.

Just as Freud and Hacking believe that the individual is created by what they have forgotten, John Locke in his book *Essay* (1700 / 1975), writes that an individual is not constituted by a biography, but by “a remembered biography” (Douglas 1992; Hacking 1996:81). In the development of the study of memory, it is insightful to read Locke’s vivid description of recovered memory:

The Mind very often sets itself on work in search of some hidden *Idea* and turns, as it were, the Eye of the Soul upon it; though sometimes too they start up in our Minds of their own accord, and offer themselves to the Understanding; and very often are roused and tumbled out of their dark Cells into open Day-light, by turbulent and tempestuous Passion; our

affections bringing *Ideas* to our Memory, which had otherwise lain quiet and unregarded (Locke 1700 (1975):152-153).

Once again there is mention of the link between memory and identity (see *Chapter Eight* for more details).

In contrast to long-term memory being directly linked to culture, short term memory can be analysed without reference to culture and history. With “long-term semantic memory of a historical past, a memorizing which extends memory well beyond the life of the individual, the problem of the nature of the subject must come to the fore” (Bloch 1996:229).

Such remembrance situates the individual in time by “invoking, or not invoking, notions of a past interaction with an external world which contains truth and falsehoods, permanent and impermanent elements, which is, or is not, in a state of continual creative dialectic flux” (Bloch 1996:229-230). In this way, according to Bloch (1996) not only are individuals “created”, but they also create an imagined real world in which a predecessor exists, with his/her imagined created self that refers to the present.

St. Augustine, in his famous book *Confessions*, poetically wrote of the intrigues of memory and claimed it is: “the abyss of human consciousness” (1991:179 (397-398AD); cf. Warner 1963). Referring to this consciousness, Bloch writes that

[H]igher order consciousness, consciousness of being conscious, requires the representation of the self. The self-representation of this self, its consciousness of temporal and spatial existence, is memory (1996:241).

Memory, however, should be understood as “essentially incomplete”. It is “perspectival”, constantly moving (Lambek 1996:242), or “shot through with holes / *mémoire trouée*” as defined by Henri Raczymow, mentioned in the introduction to this chapter (1994; cf. Raczymow 2003).

Memory is neither completely subjective nor completely objective — it is rather intermediary — before it can be authorised in collective texts, such as history books, memorialisations or legal testimony. Benedict Anderson’s (1991) belief is that one cannot recapture memory and therefore one has to replace it through the use of narrative. This belief is similar to Sigmund Freud’s understanding of how dreams work. The act of dreaming is not based on a solid narrative or picture / symbol / image. One does not know if the dream images originated in the dream world, or the waking world — of that there is no certainty — but the retelling of the dream takes on a creative process of its very own. The words that describe the dream become the dream, and it is the retold version that one remembers, the “representation, not the original experience” (Lambek 1996:242). Kentridge’s films are dreamlike, yet they are also the telling and re-telling of other people’s “factual” experiences / memories. They are dreamlike in the sense that they are hallucinatory and surrealistic. For example in *Mine*, Soho Eckstein plays with a miniature rhinoceros on his luxurious bed.

5.5 Screen memories *Part I*

Memory is understood as acts of narrative, or retellings, a claim Sigmund Freud made when he postulated the concept of “screen memories” — memories of memories, or remembered fantasies as real (see below). Richard Terdiman adds that memory “cannot distinguish between the register of facts and that of interpretation” (1993:346; cf. Lambek 1996:252). Reachable memory is mediated “either as subjective experience or as objective fact, but is always in the act of being made” (Lambek 1996:242). As Richard Terdiman puts it “representation can never be identical reproduction” (1993:59; cf. Lambek 1996:242). This idea is central to *Stereoscope* and the accompanying series of etchings, called *Sleeping on Glass*. For example, *Stereoscope* shows the screen split in two. On either side Soho/Felix is shown standing and brooding. At first glance the two sides look identical, but they are not. There are actually many differences between them. In *Sleeping on Glass*, one etching shows two “identical” tea cups drawn in pencil on a double-paged text taken from an old book. They look “identical” too, but they are not. They are both representations only. Literally too, because they are drawings of teacups and not the actual tea cups themselves. This description of his drawings are to emphasise that Kentridge in drawing “identical” images, a practice he makes use of often in his works, appears to be aware that no two images of any representation can in reality be identical. He seems to be emphasising the fact that representations as he portrays them are like memories, mediated, subjective and interpretative. *Figure 5.19* below shows two “identical” bakelite telephones — this is a still taken from *Stereoscope*.

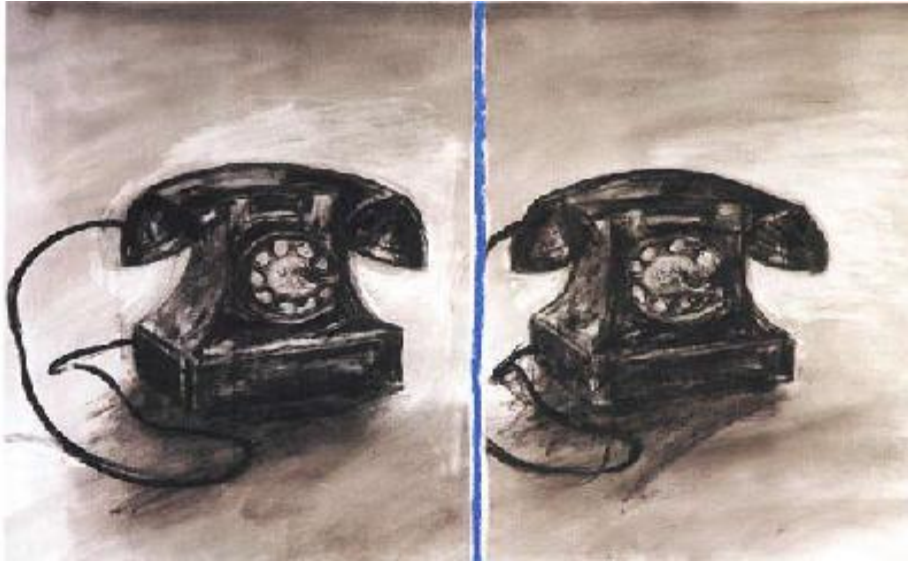


Figure 5.19 Still from *Stereoscope* 1998—1999 (Christov-Bakargiev 1999:9).

Memory by definition implies an individual / self / subject (as already stated) who is the one who remembers. Contemporary views perceive the character of this subject to be reliant on references to memory. In other words, the “I” is a creation of who “I” was and what “I” experienced — memory and identity are intrinsically bound. (Details on memory and identity are further explored in *Chapter Eight*.) Remembering functions similarly for both individual and collective subjects. Both narrate and represent their identities, then reproduce their representations through individual and public tools or mediums. There is no “pre-given primordial or essential identity existing apart from the ongoing construction of the self” (Lambek 1996:244). Benedict Anderson (1991) claims that “it is out of oblivion that narratives spring” (cited in Lambek 1996:244). This is an indirect reference to the unconscious. Direct, unmediated remembering of past experiences is impossible, hence one relies on the narrative construction to support and create continuity. To repeat, individual and collective memory is never exact reproduction, but “an

artifice to render the continuity in change realistic” (Lambek 1996:244). This “artifice” is significant. Not only is it a necessary response to “oblivion”, but it functions in no small part “by means of selective oblivion, or censorship” (Lambek 1996:244). Objectified narrative can be understood as a purification of direct experience, “a transformation of pain into art” (Lambek 1996:244). This can of course be a literal reference to Kentridge’s films where pain (his own and others) is transformed into art. In these films he portrays the pain and trauma experienced by those suffering during apartheid and South Africa’s civil war (during the apartheid era, pre-dominantly in the Kwa-Zulu Natal regions between the Inkatha supporters and the (then banned) African National Congress supporters). See *Figure 5.20* below — a drawing of decapitated heads that evoke sympathy for the pain etched on their (aesthetically beautiful) faces, and for the torture and fear they must have endured before death.



Figure 5.20 Detail from drawing of *Casspirs (sic) Full of Love* (Benezra, Boris, Cooke, Sitas and Cameron 2001:61).

To reiterate, narrated memory is “a poesis” — a creation and a transformation / conversion of remembered experiences (cf. Terdiman 1993). Hans-Georg Gadamer suggests that “[O]nly by forgetting does the mind have ... the capacity to see everything with fresh eyes, so that what is long familiar combines with the new into many leveled unity (or symbolic consistency)” (1985:16).

As previously mentioned, Kentridge refers to forgetting as “disremembering” — which is a deliberate and conscious act (cited in Boris 2001:34). Conscious memory is perceived as unresolved or residual, or as a trace. In this regard, conscious memory is important “less as the trace of the past than as the kernel of

the future” (Lambek 1996:244; cf. Kugelmass 1996). *Felix in Exile* specifically warns against “collective” amnesia. In 1994 Kentridge clearly stated he was “erecting a beacon against the process of forgetting the routes of our recent past” (cited in Boris 2001:33). He blatantly stated how important remembering is “in order to navigate the future” (cited in Boris 2001:33). Kentridge suggests the concept of “anamnesis” which he defines as a healing through remembering (Boris 2001:33). This idea is similar to Freud’s “talking cure” (psychoanalysis), whereby patients recall memories and discuss them with the analysand. Once again there is a reference to traces of time — just as with Kentridge’s works and the smudges of charcoal and erasures that refuse to be eradicated without leaving a trace behind. In the *History of the Main Complaint* — he deals with this concept (“anamnesis”) extensively. He “remembers” his own (those that he experienced as a child, opening a box in his father’s study to find photographs of the Sharpeville Massacre; and witnessing the beating of a man. Both of these memories are referenced in *Felix in Exile* and *History of the Main Complaint*) and others’ memories (memories of rioters, activists, the subaltern, the dislocated) — this is very clear. Soho/Felix is forced to remember not only his own responsibility in supporting apartheid, but he is confronted with the heinous crimes that occurred during this period. He grapples with both personal and collective guilt, but does he resolve his guilt? Does this “remembering”, however coerced it might seem, result in the “healing” suggested by Kentridge? He is physically “healed” in the film — lying ill for a long time and then getting better. His physiological make-up is restored, yet can the same be said of his psychical make-up / conscious? Where does Soho/Felix go to now? Is it not a case of “business as usual”? This is of

course another reference to the TRC — it was based on the same assumption as Kentridge's. Through remembering and therefore bearing witness — a healing would be bestowed on all — victims and perpetrators alike. However, as author and researcher of this dissertation, there is no evidence to support with any certainty that this was the actual outcome of the TRC (although technically of course, trauma and healing cannot be measured in any empirical / evidential way).

The formation of the collective self is analogous to the formation of the individual self. However, specific individual experiences present idioms for narrating collective identity and experience. This is apparent in the concept of “collective memory”. This concept relies on specific discourses relevant to the collective self, which bind individual selves together, such as post-colonialist subjects or gender orientation. Individual identities make up a collective whole.

In both the individual and collective case we have today in the west the conceptualization of highly bounded entities distinguished from one another by their property (Handler 1988), property that includes enviable, sacred memories belonging to their rightful owners (Lambek 1996:245).

Again, the TRC was created to give acknowledgement and authenticity to those collective / individual memories.

Considering memory as symbolically mediated does not give one the licence to create imaginative stories — memories are often supported by evidence. Kentridge provides his own evidence to support his “memories”: maps; ledgers; documentary footage; photographs; etcetera. Furthermore, memories are “organized by means of certain cultural conventions” (Lambek 1996: 246; cf. Kirmayer 1996). Mikhail Bakhtin identifies the “chronotope” as one of these

cultural conventions (1981). The chronotope refers to the spatio-temporal continuum in which the action of narratives is constructed. It is essentially a concept that allows for the comparison of worlds in which individuals exist — it links the “events of the memories to the events of their recounting” (Lambek 1996:247). Frederick Nietzsche wrote, in the *Genealogy of Morality*:

Perhaps there is nothing more terrible and mysterious in the whole prehistory of mankind than our mnemonic technique. We burn something into the mind so that it will remain in the memory; only what still hurts will be retained (cited in Sebald 2003:184).

Is this a reference again to a “sebaceous wound”? Perhaps memory only logically consists of the recall of past traumas? Or is all memory traumatic because all memory is “loss”?

Victor Burgin reiterates that what one calls “‘the present’ is not a perpetually fleeting point on a line ‘through time’ but a collage of disparate times, an imbrication of shifting and contested spaces” (1996:182).

This too is an apposite description of Kentridge’s films in the *Drawings for Projection* series. His animated works recall films such as Fritz Lang’s *Metropolis* (1927), Sergei Eisenstein’s *Battleship Potemkin* (1925), and Vsevolod Pudovkin’s *Mother* (1926) — where *montage* (Russian / Soviet Formalism) and German Expressionism originated.

Self-identity is “woven in time and space, history and geography, memory and place” (Burgin 1996:190). Obviously, any identity, whether it is individual, national

or cultural, implies both a place and a time. Once again it is a reference to Kentridge's films being autobiographical. This quote is also fascinating in light of Kentridge's love for the city of Johannesburg (prevalent in the film *Johannesburg, 2nd Greatest City after Paris*). This line of thought is pursued in detail later on in this study.

5.6 Conclusion

To sum up, this chapter has focused on postmemory, memory, collective memory, trauma, and how they relate to Kentridge's works. In the introduction of this chapter there were a few paragraphs written on Elie Wiesel's memoir *Night* (1960). One of the main points posited is that bearing witness is important because it gives testimony and that in turn enables individuals to remember. It is ironic that the testimony focuses on the Holocaust — the idea was to make sure that such an occurrence never happens again — through remembering. Unfortunately, following generations (since 1945) have seen genocide, ethnic cleansing, mass extermination of individuals — in Bosnia, Rwanda, Darfur, South Africa and Palestine, despite these testimonies and memories.

Having discussed collective and individual memory, and identity, this study now focuses on the concept of trauma, and its relationship to memory.

CHAPTER SIX: MEMORY, “THE UNCONSCIOUS” AND TRAUMA

According to Adrienne Kertzer “[W]hatever form Holocaust testimonies may assume ... they all inhabit a haunted terrain of traumatized memory” (cited in Zeitlin 2001:128; cf. Kertzer 2004; Zeitlin 2004). Traumatic memory is often experienced as a collective memory(ies), after a nation and its peoples have experienced trauma together. As such it is difficult to refer to a collective trauma without referring to the Holocaust, for very obvious reasons, which provides innumerable examples of both physical and psychological trauma endured by millions of individuals. South Africa is another country whose peoples have experienced trauma: the trauma of apartheid. Kentridge’s portrayals of South Africa’s collective traumas and the resultant memories can be extrapolated to other, similarly experienced traumas. For some viewers, Kentridge’s references to apartheid and its atrocities even transcend the era and time. His images of dead bodies becoming one with the ground can be an image taken from any war, or any war-torn country where historical atrocities have taken place. How these traumatic memories are remembered; how they are processed; and how the collective and the individual within such collectives / nations are mourned; and healed; are themes that are apparent in William Kentridge’s works (for example the reference to The Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa). While South Africa’s traumatic past is an obvious concern to Kentridge, so too is the traumatic past of the Jews, because of his ancestry / heritage. Comparing and extrapolating these collective and individual traumas are also theoretically important. These comparisons serve to clarify certain concepts but the correlations also highlight

contrasts; connect different cultures and histories; and through doing so, ultimately provide insight into the themes that concern Kentridge.

Taking a brief excurses, this introduction now provides the reader with some background on William Kentridge and his ancestral heritage. Kentridge's Jewish ancestral name is Kantorowicz, whose origins lie in the town Zhager (Zagare in English) in Lithuania. His grandfather, Morris Kantorowicz, who emigrated to South Africa in 1903, pre-emptively saved the entire family from annihilation by emigrating. The Nazis obliterated all three thousand Jewish inhabitants of Zhager. He would now be resting with those Jews in Naryshkin, a mass grave that the victims themselves had to dig up before being murdered. Zhager had been home to the Jews since the fourteenth century — making up a substantial sixty percent of the population. They were renowned for having the largest library in the whole of Lithuania and for having learned men. Several thousand more Jews were slaughtered in the market square — Jews sent there from Krok, Popilan, Yaneshok, and Zaimol among others (Stone 2003). In her *Last Walk to Naryshkin Park*, Rose Zwi described how the murders began on Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement: Holy of Holy days) in October 1941: “so that blood ran in rivulets over the cobblestones into the Shveta River which turned red” (Zwi cited in Stone 2003:95). A names memorial is to be found in the four volumes of *The Holocaust in Lithuania 1941—1945: A Book of Remembrance* (2002), edited by Saul Missroff and Rose Lerer Cohen. It contains the names of over a hundred and forty thousand Jews murdered by the Nazis; abetted by Lithuania militiamen and Zhager's own citizens. There were many atrocities carried out:

[T]he denizens conducted a public humiliation of Rabbi Israel Riff who was in-spanned like a beast and made to drag a cart laden with large stones; they precipitated the premature birth of a baby on the edge of the mass grave and smashed the newborn’s head in sight of the Jewish mother who was then shot (Stone 2003:94-95).

At Naryshkin, the mass grave is at first immortalised by a Soviet plaque, without acknowledging the Jews, the plaque reads: “[G]rave of the victims of fascism”. Seeking to put the record straight, concrete steel plaques in three languages (Lithuanian, Hebrew and Yiddish) were added. It reads: “Old Jewish Cemetery. May their blessed memory be for eternity.” However, in a final terrible act of hostility, the headstones were desecrated, being removed from their resting place to make pavements and even the foundation of a cowshed: “[I]ntolerance of tyranny is ingrained in those who experience its offence to the soul” (Stone 2003:96).

In William Kentridge’s still-life picture, titled *Zeno Landscape* (2002), from his film *Zeno Writing*, the charcoal resembles ash and smoke rising from the very landscape itself, bringing to mind the indescribable horror of the *Shoah* and the crematories: millions of lives going up in smoke; others buried in mass graves covered and hidden by the landscape. In expectancy of annihilating all Austro-Hungarian and Italian Jews with ease and efficiency, crematories were actually organised and constructed in Trieste. It is “no wonder Kentridge wishes to reanimate memory” (Stone 2003:96-97). With this destruction and horror clearly on his mind, Kentridge has drawn two versions of the Jewish graveyard found in Trieste, complete with their unknowable Hebrew / Yiddish names and engraved

blessings (which thereby make them as unidentifiable as those Jews buried in the many mass graves found in Europe (Stone 2003:97; cf. Christov-Bagarkiev 1998). The same can be said of *Nuit et Brouillard*, a film made by Alain Resnais in 1955 about the Nazi concentration camps. It is a documentary where there is not a single reference to the Jews. When asked about the political intent of his documentary, three decades after its release, Resnais responded: “[T]he whole point was Algeria,” where French forces had already committed, and were continuing to commit their own racially determined atrocities (Williams 1992:369). This answer is obscure - perhaps he wanted the focus of his film to be on all Holocaust / genocide victims, yet to leave out completely all mention of the Jews, leaves an incorrect idea / effect of what the Holocaust and the camps were all about. It sanitises the camps, making light of the systematic annihilation of the Jews. So too does the statement at the cemetery of Lithuania. This actually distorts history. Kentridge, quoted in Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev’s book on his art, refers to a documentary that he watched on Poland. He describes the beautiful lush countryside: “[D]eep grey-green trees and rolling hills in the soft European light” (1998:48). The shocking irony is that over a “hundred thousand people were gassed in the back of trucks during the 1940s” (1998:48). Yet there is no overt evidence of that ever having occurred. He highlights a quandary — how does one enjoy the countryside now, knowing what has happened there? (See *Chapter Nine* of this thesis for a discussion on Kentridge’s focus on memory and landscapes.) It is important to keep Kentridge’s ancestral heritage in mind when analysing his films.

William Kentridge’s works are representative of historical traumas. There are no limitations along spacio-temporal lines — it could be Rwanda, Bosnia, or Darfur:

In his 1999 film *Stereoscope* he uses images of police beating students in Jakarta, riots outside banks in Moscow, rebels being thrown over a bridge and then shot in the river below in Kinshasa, someone throwing rubble at the US embassy in Nairobi: all drawn from television broadcasts and newspapers appearing while he was working on the film. He concludes, “of course the images are all of Johannesburg” (Stewart 2006:14).

Kentridge was once approached by a Romanian woman who was totally in awe that his works were about Romania. She was astonished that he knew so much about her country and that he could “portray it so accurately and sensitively” (Boris 2001:33). This is testament to the fact that his films are relevant internationally and are not bound by time or geography. This chapter is concerned with memory, trauma, dreams and screen memories and how they relate to the animated films of William Kentridge.

6.1 Trauma

Allan Young (1996) highlights two meanings of traumatic memory. The one is firmly rooted in the psyche (which describes Kentridge’s films exactly), and involves images of torments, a vocabulary of agonising words, and disturbing psychological sensations. The second meaning, according to Young, is that of an evolving physical, neurological trauma (1996). This is a bodily trauma which continues to “remember” pain. Ian Hacking is of the view that what has been forgotten by one is actually what moulds / creates one’s personality — a belief based on Freudian psychology (1996). Consider the following question (raised earlier, too): what has Kentridge forgotten of his past — considering he grew up in

an anti-apartheid home, where his father was the legal counsel in the Steve Biko inquest and treason trials (Christov-Bakargiev 1999)? Kentridge refers to bodily trauma and mental trauma, he draws pictures of the insides of brains which also refers to physical pain — death by being shot or tortured to death, or pain as in memories of when one was tortured. Understanding the concepts of trauma (physical and psychical), and its relationship to memories and memorialisation; as well as their relationships with the interconnected concepts of guilt, responsibility, mourning and healing are important when referring and interpreting Kentridge’s films. Not only are these themes a constant present in his animated films, understanding them intellectually and theoretically helps to comprehend why and how Kentridge infuses his works with these themes. It sheds light on how, through these art works, Kentridge tries to come to terms with his recent past as a child of apartheid, but also how he deals with his ancestral past.



Figure 6.1 Drawing from *Faustus in Africa!* (Christov-Bakargiev 1999:21).

Hacking points out that it was actually Sigmund Freud who created and inculcated the idea of “psychic trauma” (1996:76; cf. Freud 1917 / 1957; Freud 2005; “trauerarbeit” on the cover of *William Kentridge: Black Box / Chambre Noir* (2006); see *Figure 6.2*). He is the one who introduced the concept of the repressed memory — a concept that has become entrenched in Western thought. Essentially, it was Freud who first recognised that forgotten / repressed trauma has a direct effect on an individual.



Figure 6.2 William Kentridge *Black Box / Chambre Noir* (edited by Law-Viljoen 2007a: front cover).

Ian Hacking highlighted the fact that “trauma” until recently referred specifically to violence inflicted on the body (1996). It is now believed that violence is also inflicted on the mind / self, creating invisible wounds.

Every phylogenetic memory has its roots in a particular experience. This memory of experience leaves a neurological trace in the brain. Such neurological traces, if not occasionally recalled or re-enacted simply grow fainter over time. In the cases where the opposite is true, the traces become entrenched in the individuals’ neural pathways (Stone 2003:16). (Return to *Figure 5.19* through to *Figure 5.23* in *Chapter Five* and look at the red and blue strata running through the brains drawn by Kentridge. Those strata look as if they represent neural pathways that have become entrenched in the brain — physical traces of memories.) Critics of this view argue that phylogenetic memory is not actually a memory because it does not reach the level of consciousness. Allan Young argues that it does enter one’s consciousness at every re-enactment and remembrance (1996). *Chapter Six* focuses on trauma and the repression of trauma, as well as the concepts of the “unconscious” and screen memories as they relate to William Kentridge’s *Drawings for Projection* series.

The concept of traumatic memory has its roots in early 19th century Europe, its most famous proponent being Sigmund Freud, who said: “psychic residue of past trauma is held to be at the root of present distress” (1899a:152). Underlying the concept of “traumatic memory” is the belief that the mind is filled with past memories / recollections too difficult or painful to acknowledge consciously. They

remain buried in the unconscious, but seep out and manifest themselves as psychological problems such as depression and mood swings. These symptoms, whatever they may be, are believed to represent or symbolise that past traumatic event. The symptom then needs to be “decoded” — often through the interpretation of dreams — just as Kentridge’s works need to be interpreted. It is important to decode these symbols in order to abreact the associated guilt or anger.

Michael G. Kenny refers to the pathologies of the Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (Post-Vietnam Syndrome): alcoholism, depression, crime, drug use, alienation (most apparent in *Tide Table* with Soho/Felix sitting alone at the beach) and nihilism (1995:159). Wilbur Scott adds:

Post-Vietnam Syndrome confronts us with the unconsummated grief of soldiers — impacted grief, in which an encapsulated, never-ending past deprives the present of meaning (1990:301).

Closure needs to be reached, the past “exorcised”, mourning needs to take place, and the “bio-psychological effects of trauma reversed or controlled” (Kenny 1995:159). This is not a fleeting war experience but a life / psyche changing situation that has been “induced by the residue of acknowledged or covert traumatic memories” (Kenny 1995:159). Kentridge has in a sense been able to exorcise his trauma and South Africa’s collective trauma through the process of drawing or “re-telling” in a manner similar to Freud’s “talking cure”.

Psychoanalysts have acknowledged that traumatic memories are posited in such a manner that they “retain their primordial emotional power long after the experiences which generated them” (Kenny 1995:160; cf. Freud 1899b). Sometimes, if the trauma is repetitive, those memories can become lodged in the unconscious. “It is as if time stops at the moment of trauma” (Herman 1992:37). When the trauma has been submerged in the unconscious, then the therapeutic ideal is to access these memories, bringing them into consciousness through “recreating the narrative flow of history”, or the “talking cure” of psychoanalysis (Kenny 1995:160). The aim of “exorcising” the past is so that individuals can live in the present and can finally distinguish between past experiences and present reality. In the process of this excavation of old memories, linking them to the present, a new past / history is created. It is now post post-apartheid. Kentridge’s works are a form of psychoanalysis / dream analysis — his work is symbolic and needs to be decoded. For example FELIX is a reference to his mother’s name, FELICIA. However, he was unaware of the relationship until much later when he connected the two (Christov-Bakargiev 1999; Stone 2003). The chapter now focuses on “trauma” and “memories”, the former being a foundation of Kentridge’s works.

6.2 Trauma and second witnessing

For Holocaust survivors “violence renders events ineradicable” (Kirmayer 1996:174). These victims are submerged in memories too terrifying to recall because of the pain of the recollection, with symptoms of alienation and desensitisation experienced by Holocaust survivors. Laurence Kirmayer believes

that the hindrance Holocaust survivors face in recalling memories is the fact that they are limited by language — there are no appropriate words to describe the “incomprehensible catastrophe” that is the Holocaust (1996:175).

Memories are often referred to as photographs, but Kirmayer believes that this is incorrect; memories are rather “a road full of potholes, badly in need of repair, worked on day and night by revisionist crews” (1996:176). Memories are re-constructed and details are recreated, individuals “readily engage in imaginative elaboration and confabulation” and as soon as this happens the “memory is lost forever within the animated story we have constructed” (1996:176). To reiterate, “[M]emories are narrative reconstructions” (Kirmayer 1996:182). The extreme violence, degradation, humiliation and abuse that Holocaust victims endured, render the idea of social, or individual (of the self) cohesion impossible. The self becomes detached / split from the self and from others.

Even secondary witnesses (“postmemory/ies”), although physically and generationally removed from the scene of the violence, through testimonies and stories experience empathetic trauma that affects their social reality and intrudes on their daily lives. This splitting of the self occurs when there is a self at the site of trauma — concentration camps and death camps, for example — and a second self in the present. They are two distinct selves and live in different worlds, but they are perpetuated and connected through the individual’s pain and the collective memory of the public. In the film *Stereoscope* the splitting of Soho/Felix in two could be a direct reference to Kentridge himself. In a sense he is split into two —

he has his artist's life (an opulent life, with premieres in countries around the world, and the high accolades that he continuously gets) and work, but he is also a husband, and father to three children, who does car pool in the mornings. In *WEIGHING and WANTING* this is alluded to with the incorporation of Kentridge's wife, Anne. That he has an ordinary life outside of this self-flagellating never-ending narrative of guilt, responsibility and utter bleakness that is his South African heritage as a middle class citizen, is remarkable. Will Kentridge ever forgive himself for his “role” in apartheid? His tortured unconscious mind is laid bare for the entire world to see, heart-wrenching in its inability to gain closure. Kentridge seems to be struggling with the issue of white upper middle class guilt. It is after all not a guilt that could come forward and be presented at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. It is not a guilt borne of torture and heinous crimes, but a guilt of being born and bred within a sector of society that most profited from apartheid — the white upper middle class. Kentridge appears to be struggling with this guilt — who to confess to? What to confess for? How does one exorcise this guilt? If one did not partake directly in the violence of apartheid, why does one feel responsible? How could most white people have been unaware of the atrocities carried out during apartheid in their name and in order to protect and preserve their lifestyle? Where does guilt begin and where does it end? The contradiction that Kentridge lives in his ancestral Houghton home and that he was born and brought up privileged is not lost on him. His parents actively took part in anti-apartheid activities — but now that transition and transformation have taken place how do you atone for your “guilt”? Where does a “liberal” white play his/her part in the new South Africa? The horrors of apartheid were just that — indescribably horrific —

and things were therefore clearly delineated back then. The issues were as clear as black and white, or good versus evil. Retrospectively, it was easy to take sides, and there were many instances where one could have made a difference, however small, and been part of something big — the eradication of apartheid. Kentridge was involved in student anti-apartheid activities (Christov-Bakargiev 1998; 1999). But now, it is as if South Africa and South Africans have moved on, rebuilding their lives, taking on new issues and new, differently defined evils. But for Kentridge it is as if he can never forgive himself for what has happened in the past — it is as if he is still that six year old boy who finds black and white photographs of the dead in his father’s office. He is still trying to come to terms with what he sees; he is trying to make sense of what he sees, and yet he is only six. What can he do about it, and how can he make it right?

The revulsion of the mines and the continuous recurrence of decapitated heads (see *Figures 6.3 — 6.5*) appear to allude to Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1975) — whose main character, Kurtz, has looked into darkness — and to Frederic Nietzsche's comment:

[W]hoever fights monsters should see to it that in the process he does not become a monster. And when you look long into an abyss, the abyss also looks into you (1979a:99).

That Kentridge has “looked” into the abyss, is obvious; that it has “looked” back is as obvious. One can question the darkness that resides in Kentridge’s unconscious / psyche. Sometimes the odious images that he portrays seem to erupt from the psyche of a sociopath. He seems “obsessed” with death, dying and the final throes of those who have died violently. There are no calm, easy deaths,

slipping quietly into oblivion. That these disturbing images are acceptable or tolerable is only testament to the beauty with which he draws them. That Kentridge is a soft spoken, middle-aged man living with his wife and children in suburbia is a huge contrast (contradiction even) to the images he unveils from his unconscious / conscious. It is the author of this study's belief that drawing such disturbing, repugnant images Kentridge's is a form of psychoanalysis, his catharsis. Viewing them is just as cathartic.

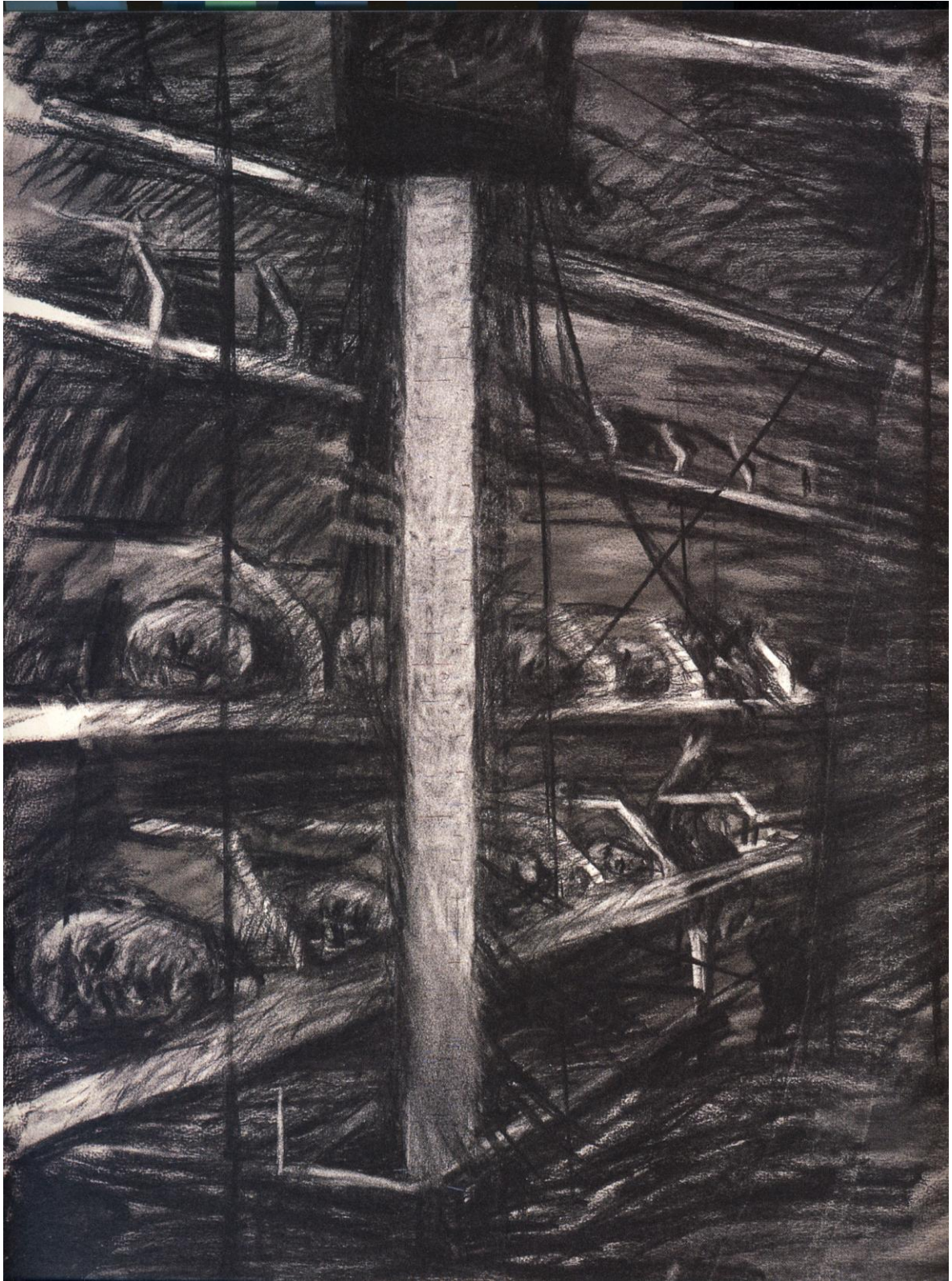


Figure 6.3 Drawing from *Mine* (Cameron, Christov-Bakargiev and Coetzee 1999:120).



Figure 6.4 Screenshot from *History of the Main Complaint* (Cameron, Christov-Bakargiev and Coetzee 1999:92).

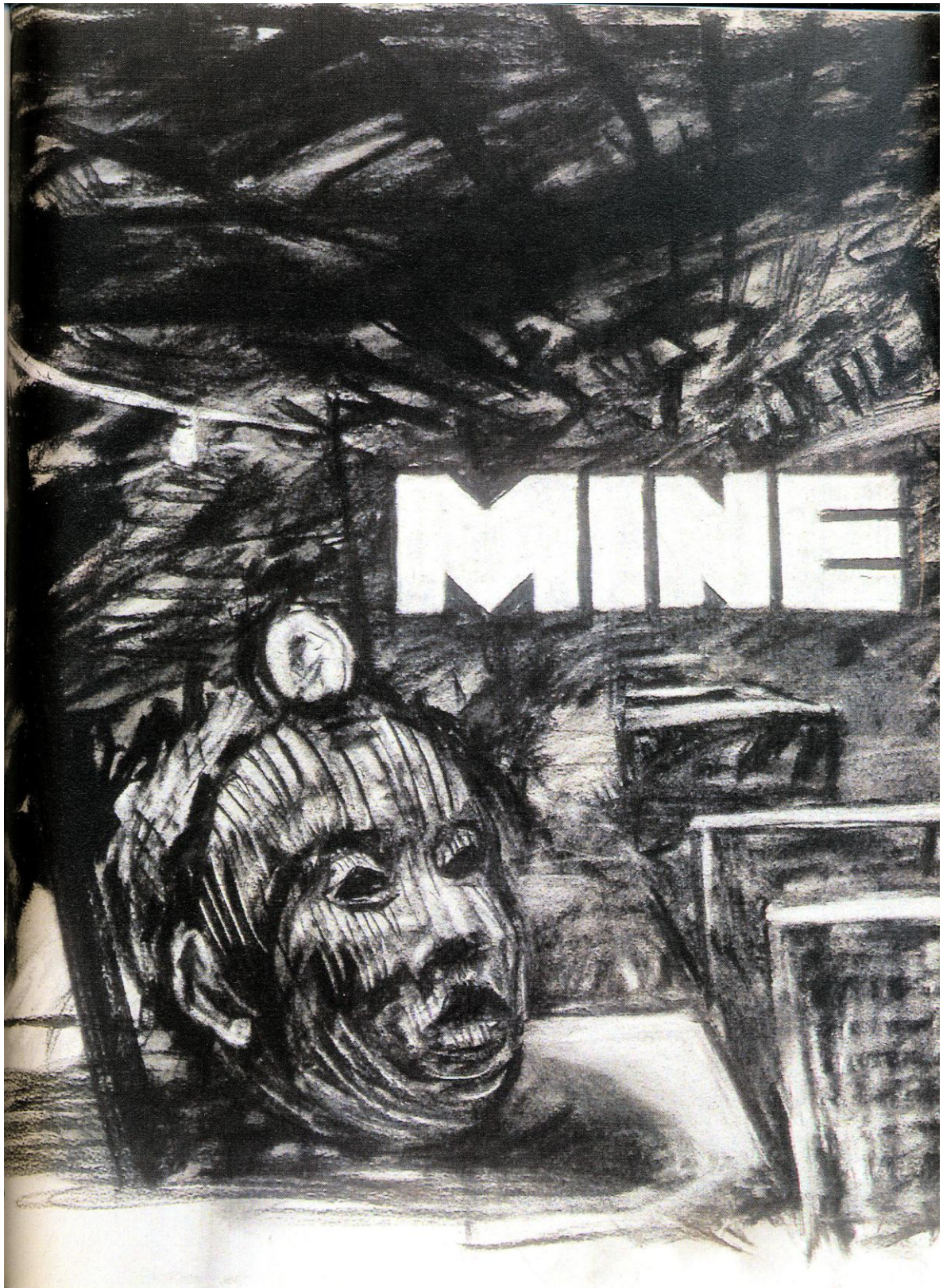


Figure 6.5 Drawing from *Mine* (Godby 1992:unpaginated).

Although Laurence Kirmayer claims that memories are narrative reconstructions, he admits that narratives cannot enclose traumatic experiences (1996:186; cf. Greenspan 1992:148). There is a direct link between Holocaust references and South Africa. Firstly, William Kentridge is South African, and South Africa's traumatic past is that of apartheid. Secondly, he is of Jewish descent (as mentioned earlier on in this chapter), his ancestral past links directly to that of the Holocaust. Thirdly, apartheid victims / survivors and Holocaust victims / survivors have to deal with similar concerns: responsibility; guilt; trauma; traumatic memories; memorialisation; forgiveness; et cetera. Holocaust survivors often claim that they died during this catastrophe, yet inexplicably remain alive — this sense of perpetual death and life coexist as their reality. Henry Greenspan (1992) believes that all survivors should tell their stories — as the listeners bear witness, the conspiracy of silence is broken, and the story is given a social context, and in turn becomes shared or communal (public) history. Revealing their personal atrocities, which others shared, together with whole communities that recognise the grotesqueries of the Holocaust, serves to maintain memory. When the trauma experienced is that of a whole community, a public space can be created by the retelling — such was the aim of the TRC. If these traumas are acknowledged by the whole community and become part of their identity then collective memory continues. Individual stories of the atrocities are validated by this collective memory. This is opposed to a private singular trauma that receives validation only through a retelling — but this act of retelling becomes an experience of reliving,

which is in itself traumatic, the past repeated. Experiences of survivors of the Holocaust provide “ineradicable memories” and endure an “excess” of memories, whose stories serve to create and sustain collective memory / history (Kirmayer 1996:190). Forgetting and remembering are social acts. With regard to the Holocaust “recollection is based on the past context in which the story is historically rooted and the current context in which the story is retold” (Kirmayer 1996:191). Very often society refuses to bear witness, mainly for socio-political reasons. Victims’ testimonies are viewed as threatening and confrontational — to the status quo, to a way of life. W. G. Sebald attempts to shed “some light on the way in which memory (individual, collective and cultural) deals with experiences exceeding what is tolerable” (2003:79). However, the question of “what is tolerable” is impossible to answer really, as it is relative. Is Kentridge attempting to answer this question — does he push the boundaries? It is the opinion of this study that Kentridge is indeed pushing the boundaries.

W. G. Sebald, a German national, states that the nation’s (Germany’s) feelings of shared guilt prevented anyone (such as writers) from keeping the nation’s collective memory alive. After all who wants to be reminded of humiliating incidents such as at the Almarkt in Dresden. Here 6,865 corpses were burnt on pyres in February 1945 by a *Schutzstaffel* troop (Sebald 2003). For some individuals living in South Africa it is the same: who wants to remember one’s passive acceptance of the apartheid regime and the benefits thereof? Who wants to admit to heinous crimes against humanity? When this denial of collective memories is prevalent, reparation is refused. Once again, this is also dealt with in

WEIGHING ... and WANTING and *History of the Main Complaint*, as well as in *Stereoscope*. In *Felix in Exile*, made in the period of drastic change in South Africa — from apartheid to democracy (1994 — 1996) — Kentridge highlights the importance of keeping collective memory alive. He states that he was “erecting a beacon against the process of forgetting the routes of our recent past” (cited in Boris 2001:33). Laurence Kirmayer (1996:193) points out that memories are more powerful and striking when retold to a receptive audience. Memories become easily accessible, wholly developed. Once this is achieved, societies and communities must create cultural events to sustain and support these memories throughout time. Culture and history are not simply created by individuals but they themselves create individuals. Robben Island, now a museum, is a famous cultural icon because it housed prisoner 46664: Nelson Mandela, former president of South Africa, former political activist, and former political prisoner.

Phenomenological preservation of past states is mainly determined by history and/or an individual’s perception of themselves within history, through individuals, places / sites and differing views of ethics and intentions (Bloch 1989a; Bloch 1996: 217). With regard to being in history, there is no one, singular way of looking to the past or the future. (See *Chapter Eight* which deals with memory, history, identity, time and space.)

According to William Niederlander, a psychoanalyst, the worst kind of psychological burden rests on those who managed to escape death — survival guilt, for ... “[E]xistence prolonged beyond the experience of death has its affective

center in a sense of guilt, the guilt of the survivor ...” (cited in Sebald 2003:163). (See *Chapter Seven* for more details on this.) How ironic is it that it is not the Nazis that bear such guilt but the survivors, victims that carry an indelible “deep scar left by the *encounter with death* in its most terrible forms” (cited in Sebald 2003:163). Once again there is a reference to the ineradicable — the leaving behind of a trace — of trauma — as Kentridge’s works leave a trace of trauma in the form of a direct “scar” — inerasable charcoal. In the survivor’s mind the stain / scar was a “chronologically conditioned emgram of death” (cited in Sebald 2003:164). Niederlander found there to be many physical symptoms, along with the mental afflictions of the survivors: brain damage, sleep disorders, heart problems, and etcetera. Jean Améry, a Holocaust survivor, believed that “the discourse of suicide begins where psychology ends” and that it related specifically to “pure negation” and “the damnably unimaginable” (cited in Sebald 2003:164). Jean Améry committed suicide many decades later.

6.3 Memory and dreams

Sigmund Freud’s psychoanalytic theory is based on the idea / concept of the unconscious and infantile sexuality. Freud’s interest in this theory began with the diagnosis and treatment of hysteria. Freud claimed that the hysterical symptom is caused directly by the “repressed” memory of something too disturbing to be allowed into the conscious realm (memories that are too: shameful; exciting; frightening). His aim was to recover this lost memory / event, either through hypnosis or free association, once the memory / event is recovered it gets restored to conscious memory; thereby liquidating the symptom that had usurped its place.

This would afford the individual “closure” (Freud 1899b / 1962; 1900 / 1991a; 1915 / 1991b; cf. Rycroft 1972). Kentridge has created a name for the artistic process that he enacts — a process between rationality and chance. Kentridge dubs this process “*fortuna*”, and it involves the coherence or coming together of differing ideas, emotions, images — not all that make sense immediately — either to himself or to others (cited in Boris 2001:35).

According to Jennifer Arlene Stone (2003:16), Freud

would have objected to the materialization of a cure through inappropriate traumatic means, instead of the deliberate and careful procedures of the transference and ‘talking cure’ for very obvious reasons: traumatising an individual is not the aim here.¹

Another way of gaining access to the unconscious is through the interpretation of dreams. Jennifer Arlene Stone sums it up thus: “... the unconscious in dreams portrays a three dimensional image of the mind’s eye” (2003:17). Interpretation in psychoanalysis gained prominence when the memory or the real event came to be replaced by the fantasy of the forbidden wish. Psychoanalytic dreams are perceived as being an hallucinatory fulfillment of a wish, but a wish that is deplorable to the conscious mind of the subject who wishes / dreams. Where this wish gains entry into a subject’s consciousness it does so in a “compromise

¹ Remarkably, the field of neuroscience has studied the neural pathways and their results support the fact that the “talking cure” therapy, over time and with perseverance, does eventually change the physical structure of the brain circuitry / synapses by establishing new neural systems that override the neural pathways that usually make the “wrong” connections. This results in therapeutic change (Stone 2003:16). There is therefore scientific proof that psychoanalysis does have an effect on some individuals.

formation” that is the outcome of conflict / variance (Freud 1899b; cf. Freud 1991a and 1991b). “The manifest dream, therefore, is a transformation of the latent content in the service of the defense” (Burgin 1996:205). This theory applies to the analysis of an array of symptoms, parapraxes and other manifestations of speech and behaviour which suggest defensive conflict — defensive mechanisms such as: repression, negation, projection, disavowal, foreclosure. With regards to all defense / conflict mechanisms, interpretation is the means / method by which latent / covert meanings are derived from manifest content. Kentridge’s works can be viewed as dreamlike. It is almost as if his unconscious is trying to deal with the horrors of apartheid and in so doing his work is a window into his unconscious or dreams — his dreams are nightmares of torture and death (see *Figure 6.6* and *Figure 6.7*).



Figure 6.6 Drawing from *Faustus in Africa!* (Christov-Bakargiev 1999:21).



Figure 6.7 Drawing from *Faustus in Africa!* (Christov-Bakargiev 1999:21).

In Freud’s book, *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1991a / 1900), he postulates two methods of interpretation. The first is the analysis or interpretation of dream elements — a method which he tested on his own dreams at first — this interpretative method consists in following the chains of association of the dreamer. In this method, the dreamer himself/herself interprets his/her dreams — the latent meanings of a manifest element are uncovered indirectly, through webs of associations governed by the “primary processes” of unconscious formation: condensation; displacement; and “conditions of representability” (Burgin 1996:205). Kentridge has purged his unconscious / conscious of horrendous “memories / postmemories” — and placed them into an acceptable form — one that is “representable” / tolerable to draw / view. However, some individuals might

disagree that it is in an acceptable form, because some of the images themselves are disturbing.

The second method of interpretation of dreams is carried out not by the dreamer him/herself, but by the analyst, where certain symbols are translated on the basis of knowledge of typical symbols. Freud noted that these invariant symbols are found in dreams, as well as folktales, myths, religion, and cultural spheres (1991a / 1900). Freud only focused on what the symbol meant to the individual in analysis. This meaning was only uncovered over a period of some time, contextualised within the other materials produced in analysis.

There is a distinction between processes and contents. Freud named the combinatory logics, such as displacement and condensation, “primary processes” (1991a). These processes completely rule / govern the construction of unconscious practices / productions. Freud also distinguishes between descriptive unconscious and the topological unconscious. The former is a generalised use of all instances of representations not present to consciousness, this therefore means that it includes “preconscious” representations (“conscious-preconscious system”) (Burgin 1996:209). The topological unconscious refers to representations that are barred to the realm of consciousness through the mechanisms of defence. There are obviously memories and different experiences that William Kentridge is not allowing us to see.

Interpretation of the unconscious is the posing of questions and the creation of knowledge in the very process of reading itself: a knowledge of the reader and the text. Kentridge proposes questions and challenges the viewer. He has clearly stated that *Felix in Exile* specifically questions “the way in which people who had died on the journey to this new dispensation would be remembered” (cited in Boris 2001:32). Shoshana Felman writes that the psychoanalytic meaning is “essentially the reading of a difference that inhabits language, a kind of mapping in the subject’s discourse of its points of disagreement with, or difference from, itself” (1987:21-22; cf. Felman 2003). Furthermore:

[T]he unconscious ... is not simply that which must be read but also, and perhaps primarily, that which reads. The unconscious is a reader. What this implies most radically is that whoever reads, interprets out of his unconscious, is an analysand, even when the interpretation is done from the position of the analyst (Felman 1987:21-22).

In recognising the “individual” dimension of reading, a hypothesis of general, unconsciously generated meaning may be arrived at — simply “because *the subject of individual biography is not socially unique*” (Burgin 1996: 211).

In *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud distinctly states that memory and fantasy can no longer be definitively disassociated (1991a / 1900). Moreover he states: “the way in which memory behaves in dreams is undoubtedly of the greatest importance for any theory of memory in general” (1991a:4, 20; cf. Freud 1900). In his essay *A Note upon the Mystic Writing Pad*, Freud returned to the idea that “even the most insignificant sensory impression leaves an unalterable trace, ever available for resurrection” (cited in Burgin 1996:217). His aim in the essay was to

find a place for memory in the representation of the “first topology” — the conscious, the preconscious and the unconscious. The “mystic writing pad” analogy aims to institute differences of topological location within memory (Burgin 1996:217). Not only do Kentridge’s works from his films contain faint traces of charcoal, but they are also forever preserved on celluloid.

Memory is not based in the conscious realm — because if it were, the system of perception-consciousness would be overcome by the sheer multitude of fresh impressions. All memory is unconscious — descriptively speaking. In the topological sense, memory is based in the preconscious. With regards to Kentridge’s work, there is the “installation” series, called *Sleeping on Glass* (1991), which was made in accompaniment to the film *Stereoscope*. The exhibit highlighted Kentridge’s “obsession” with memory, mirroring and dreams. His aim with regard to this series was to create a three-dimensional depth of theatre, life and cinema. He created a series of small installations — animated films that change rather dramatically into “objects” and “interiors” — such as bits of furniture. They are cohesive, yet very different, combined / morphing sculptures and animated films. In the *Sleeping on Glass* series a separate set of ink etchings appears alongside the exhibit (see *Figure 6.8* and *Figure 6.9*). These drawings give direct examples of free association as Freud intended. The etchings are drawn onto torn out pages from old books, yellowing with age. The images are in pencil and aquatint, but the words are in red pastel.



Figure 6.8 An exhibit from the *Sleeping on Glass* installation (Christov-Bakargiev 1999:81).



Figure 6.9 An exhibit from the *Sleeping on Glass* installation (Christov-Bakargiev 1999:81).

It is an absolutely absurd, but fascinating notion: what would it really be like to sleep on glass? What if the glass cracks, breaks; sleeping on glass would render it unreliable. It also refers to the fragility of memory. Glass is fragile — cracks and breakage are almost unavoidable. Yet, even without direct breaking, glass over time gets fine cracks — and is unsustainable in the long run — so too is memory. Glass is also reflective and reflexive, transparent and translucent / opaque as are some memories. This implies a contradiction of sorts, and memory too can be contradictory, as can dreams. Reflexivity is a reflection, an image produced by reflection, or a mirroring. Mirrors are made of glass and so are lenses / eye-glasses, which implies looking / seeing into the mind of the unconscious. It is also a reference to self-reflexivity, looking into a mirror, looking into one's own unconscious, interpreting one's own dreams (being an analysand). The self-reflexive / recursive aspect of mirroring / glass is evident in Kentridge's works. The audience is allowed to view an aspect of themselves — that is, in an act of turning back upon itself by which a subject grasps, in a moment of intellectual clarity, that which it is normally blind to perceiving — in this instance, his/her humanity

(Ricouer 1974). Kentridge does this by asking one to question one’s societal values and by emphatically foregrounding the awfulness that humanity can commit and the atrocities that they / one “allow” humanity to commit — apartheid, ethnic cleansing and genocide. Kentridge questions societal values quite clearly in *Johannesburg, 2nd Greatest City after Paris*, where he presents Soho Eckstein as valuing his businesses and properties and acquisitions more than he values his wife. While he busily buys up half of Johannesburg, he neglects his wife who then has an affair with Felix Teitlebaum. He realises his loss in *Sobriety, Obesity & Growing Old*, where he then places value on his personal life. Soho Eckstein’s alienation and loneliness is made apparent during a scene where he lies in his bed, his arm stretched over to the side where one assumes Mrs. Eckstein used to sleep, with only his cat for company. Kentridge also places value on marital harmony in *WEIGHING ... and WANTING* where he emphasises the importance of having a partner over material possessions. He also questions a society that places value on all acquisitions — taking pleasure in the buying or owning of artefacts, rather than taking pleasure in the artefact itself. For example in *Mine*, Soho Eckstein excavates or acquires a piece of art, a Nigerian bust, but it is just one of his possessions among many — on a scene on his bed-turned-office, he has that specific art piece strewn across his bed, along with accounting printouts, dismembered heads and of course, the rhinoceros. The rhinoceros on its own questions societal values — a belief that nature can be bought and controlled rather than simply enjoyed at a distance and not as a product or possession. With regards to forcing the viewer to “see” human rights violations — apartheid behind the veneer — the exposing of police and state brutality (*Ubu and the Truth*

Commission, Stereoscope and *History of the Main Complaint*), Kentridge depicts ethnic cleansing and genocide in Africa. In *Felix in Exile*, the numerous dead bodies show the terrible results of genocide (also apparent in the play *Faustus in Africa!*). Once again, the images of the dead could be from any country in Africa where war or civil unrest has taken place, such as the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda or Somalia. Kentridge implies that society, as a whole, has turned / turns a blind eye to what has gone on / is going on in cases of civil war / strife / ethnic cleansing. He further implies that through this passivity, that is, not saying anything about what is occurring / what has occurred, society condones such actions. Through this complacency / passivity society condones those abhorrent occurrences. While there are many human rights organisations and there were anti-apartheid movements, the majority of white people during the apartheid era and the world in general, were / are in denial about human rights abuses. He makes the viewer aware of his/her own shortcomings, by providing the audience, to borrow Jean Baudrillard’s terminology, with reference to the “*more-real-than real*”, or more “*visible-than-visible*” images (cited in Kellner 1989b). He shows us the consequences of apartheid — mutilated and broken bodies — in *Felix in Exile* and *History of the Main Complaint*.

With regards to glass and mirrors: Kentridge’s films contain many instances of mirrors / “mirroring”, most especially in *Felix in Exile*, *History of the Main Complaint*, and *Stereoscope*. In the first film, he repeatedly looks into a mirror, initially seeing himself peering back at himself, but after a few shots he sees an unnamed black woman reflecting back at him (referred to by Kentridge as “Nandi”,

cited in Christov-Bakargiev 1998:12). In *History of the Main Complaint*, Soho/Felix looks at his rear-view mirror again and again — sometimes it is a close-up of his eyes only, and other times images of apartheid South Africa go by — the images / memories that came to be known and validated through the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. With regard to the concept of narcissistic doubling / mirroring is the fact that Kentridge uses his own image as the image for Soho/Felix. Kentridge has expressly stated that he uses himself as a model simply because he needs a model whenever he works and the easiest solution was to make himself the model, rather than have someone on call, therefore Soho/Felix only resembles Kentridge. One can question this pragmatic “alibi” and in doing so further question the status of his claims about his own work. Is one getting too close to the ‘real’ Kentridge — is his alibi a defence mechanism? Which leads one to presume that he is hiding something / someone (himself?)? If so, why? If it can be argued that his work lays bare his unconscious for the world to see, why is he now putting a barrier / boundary in place?

Returning to the *Sleeping on Glass* artwork, this was an art exhibition on memory which was held at the Villa Medici, in Rome, where Kentridge exhibited these “installations” (Alemani 2006). The object / furniture-transformed sculptures featured as a rear-projection screen onto which the animated images of *Sleeping on Glass* were projected. *Sleeping on Glass* is revealing of Kentridge’s interest / state of mind — these transitory images represent the constant transitory nature of memory and dreams. His work suggests the dreamlike quality of our thoughts and of the devices that make memory and dreams achievable / attainable and

imaginable. The etchings are of: two women (*Figure 6.10*); tea cups (another reference to glass / porcelain) (*Figure 6.11*); landscaped gardens (*Figure 6.12*); mines (*Figure 6.13*); and trees (one whole (*Figure 6.14*); one broken in two (*Figure 6.15*)).

Collective memories are represented by the glass, while the individual is represented by the inferred sleeper / dreamer. By association — he implies he dreams of the memories of the collective — these are the South African peoples. There is the same notion as found in *Stereoscope*, that is, the individual and the collective coming together as one (Soho Eckstein and Felix Teitlebaum), yet remaining in an unnatural state of cohesion.

Dissecting the title “*Sleeping on Glass*” provides further insight into Kentridge’s obsession with memory. Glass not only breaks but it cuts and slices too. It can break / crack easily and in this sense it is fragile. It is also hard / resistant and if not handled with care, dangerous, and can even be used as a weapon. All of this alludes to memory. Memories can resurface previous trauma. Memories can seem to be hard in that they are impenetrable / immovable, yet when confronted, cracks often appear. Of course it is the word “sleeping” in the title that refers to dreams — everyone dreams when they sleep. It can also refer to poetic death (another reference to death) — a sleep-like quality, a “somnambulance”. Ironically, Nandi and other apartheid victims in *Felix in Exile* are given certain serenity in their faces; it is almost as though they are sleeping. With sleep, there is an immediate reversal of the state of natural unconsciousness once awakened. Sleep can be restorative /

reparative both physically and mentally — it really is an astonishing thing — all that goes on while you are dreaming.



Figure 6.10 *Sleeping on Glass* (Benezra, Boris, Cooke, Sitas and Cameron 2001:134-135).

The images of *Sleeping on Glass* require deeper analysis. With regard to *Figure 6.10*: there are images of two (“identical”) women sitting in a chair, naked and with slumped shoulders, leaning slightly forward. The writing set in these double-paged pictures is different to the rest — it appears handwritten, certainly in a script. The words in red pastel are: “ADAPTABILITY”, “COMPLIANCE” and then in a much larger size, “SILENCE” (perhaps a reference to the personal). Red pastel is

usually associated with danger and anger — both appropriate and commonly felt in South Africa. South Africa is a very dangerous country to be in and there is an ongoing and ever growing anger that democracy (it is post-1994) has not delivered what it was supposed to deliver. There is also anger at having constantly to fear for your life, because of the high level of violent crime. The nakedness of the figures represents vulnerability, of being at the mercy of South Africa and its politics and its constant violence. The images represent degrees of surrender, from least to greatest.

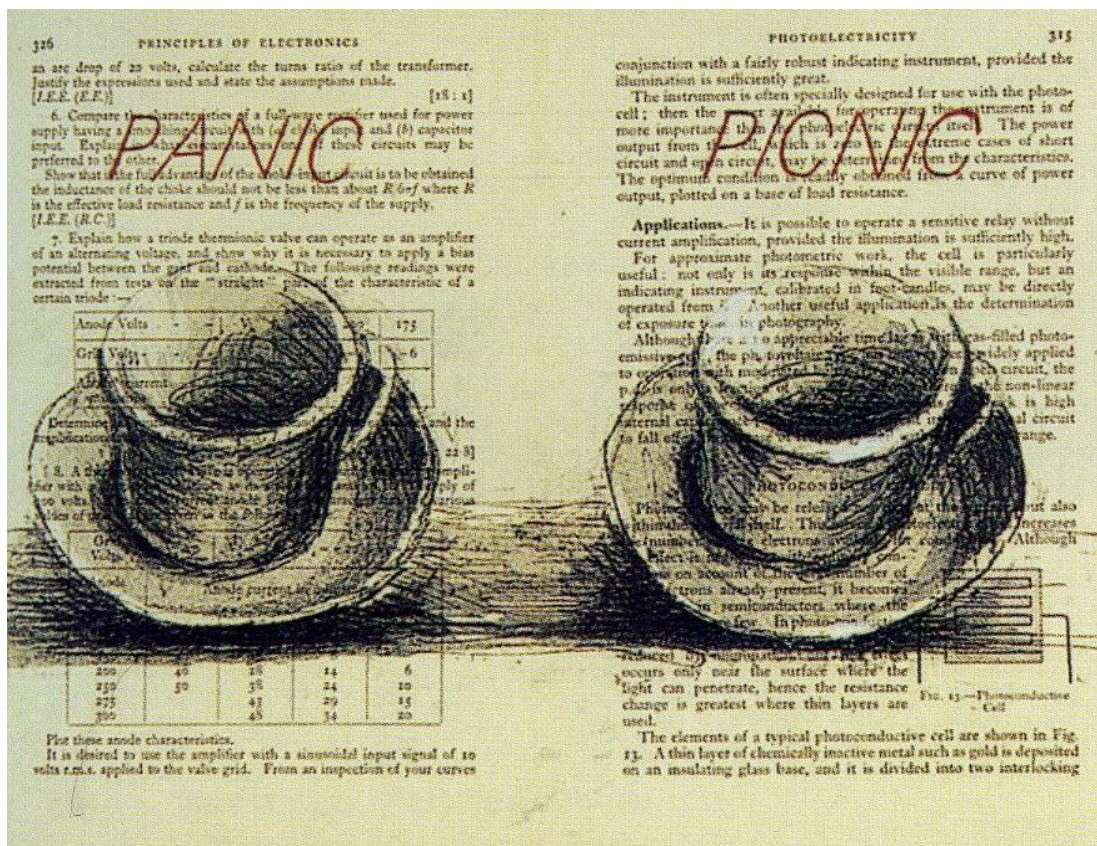


Figure 6.11 *Sleeping on Glass* (Benezra, Boris, Cooke, Sitas and Cameron 2001:134-135).

Figure 6.11 has drawings of “identical” tea cups on yellow / faded typical typeset text. The words: “PANIC” and “PICNIC”, are written above the teacups. “Panic” is

a direct reference to danger, while “picnic” is a direct reference to domesticity, which conjures up the idea of gorgeous, lazy “somnambulant” Sunday afternoons, spent out in the Botanical gardens, surrounded by loved ones. This of course is almost impossible to do today — one is too scared of becoming another crime statistic — it is simply too dangerous (the words are easily an example of free association). There is the negative reversal of picnic — as in “living in South Africa is no picnic”. The words, panic and picnic, in meaning are in direct opposition to one another. This is a “doublethink” of white South Africa — a privileged life underscored by fear because of the violent crimes being committed on a daily basis. There is a reference to china, a substance similar to glass, which in turn is a reference to memories. Perhaps this too is a longing for the past, as with *Figure 6.12*. The cups are not identical — this too refers to memories — because our memories are “memories of memories”, and can never be recalled exactly / identically, and they are only representations or reflections (which is another reference to glass). They also represent domesticity (as in *Stereoscope*), the safety and warmth that your home represents to you; yet the teacups are empty, which is a symbol of negativity. Teacups feature often in his films, from *WEIGHING ... and WANTING*, to *Mine* and as already mentioned, *Stereoscope*.

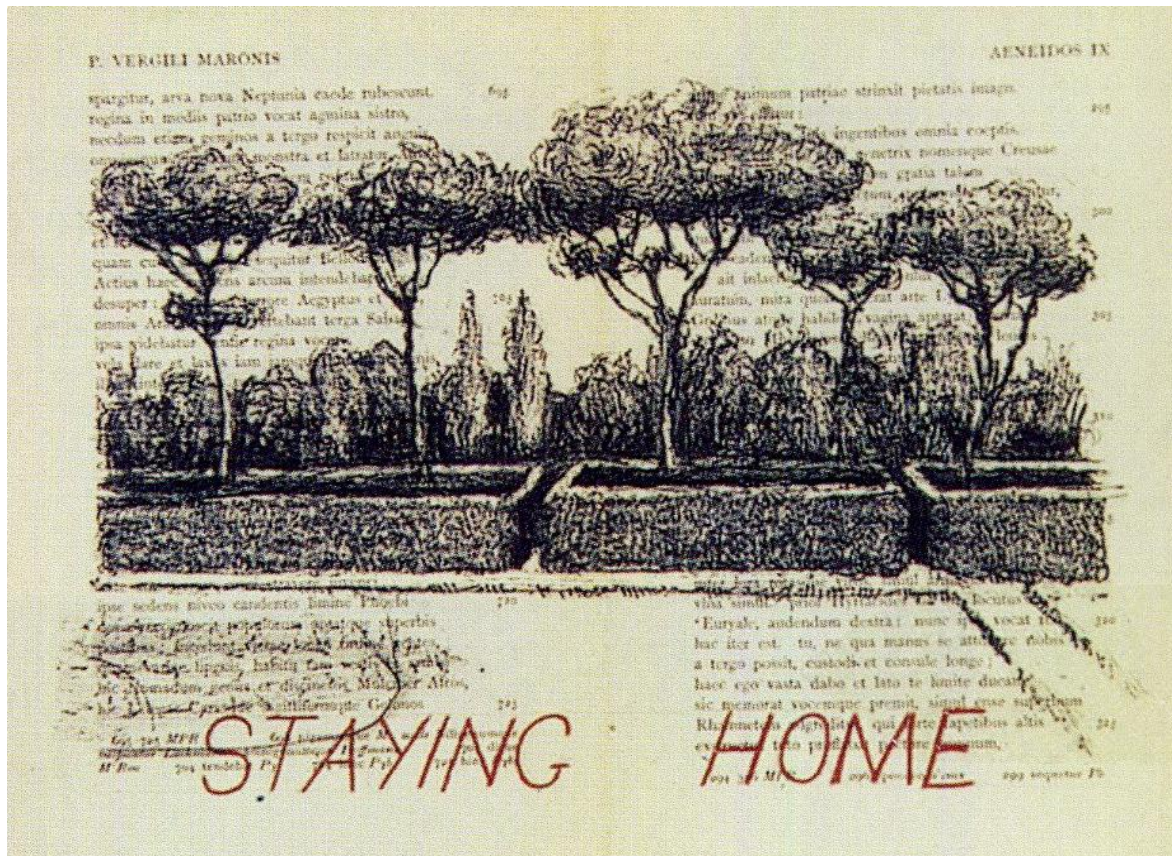


Figure 6.12 *Sleeping on Glass* (Benezra, Boris, Cooke, Sitas and Cameron 2001:134-135).

In Figure 6.12 the background text is in ordinary typeset text. The drawing is of a beautiful landscaped garden. There is some indecipherable handwriting on it, which appears in turn to be half-erased. The drawing differs from the other etchings in that this indecipherable hand-writing is separate from the drawing of trees and hedges. Once again there is very obvious erasure, with indelible smudges, and marks in pencil. These of course, are his trademark / iconic reference to memory. The words in red pastel are: “STAYING HOME”. It possibly refers to the avoiding of the political reality existing in South Africa, and fear of violence outside the home. “Home” represents warmth, safety, order (the trees and

hedges are very precisely pruned / cut). The fact that there are rubbings out is perhaps a memory of times before democracy, when things were safer for middle-class whites. These are high-maintenance suburban gardens, which indicate that they are expensive to maintain and are only affordable to those whose earnings are high. This is possibly another reference to it being a memory of a previous era, because during apartheid only whites were allowed to live in suburbia. The suburbs were completely closed off to black South Africans unless they worked as labourers, or domestic workers. They not only were not allowed to own property during the apartheid era, but, given their poverty; they certainly were not able to buy property that was expensive. Of course “staying home” could also refer to the issue of emigration. This is a fascinating question to pose to Kentridge considering that he is enamoured with Johannesburg, a captive captivated by the city (*Johannesburg, 2nd Greatest City after Paris*) — could he emigrate? These portrayals seem to represent Kentridge’s internal conflict as to whether or not he could, or would ever consider emigrating.

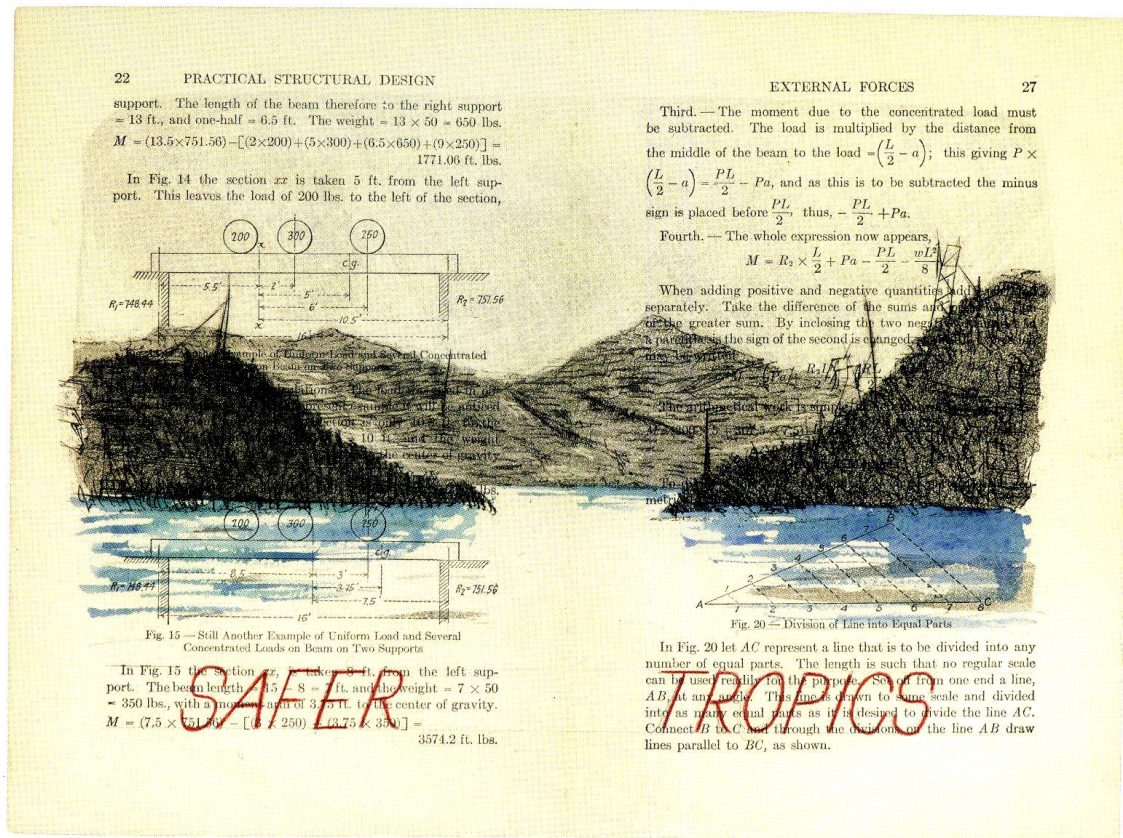
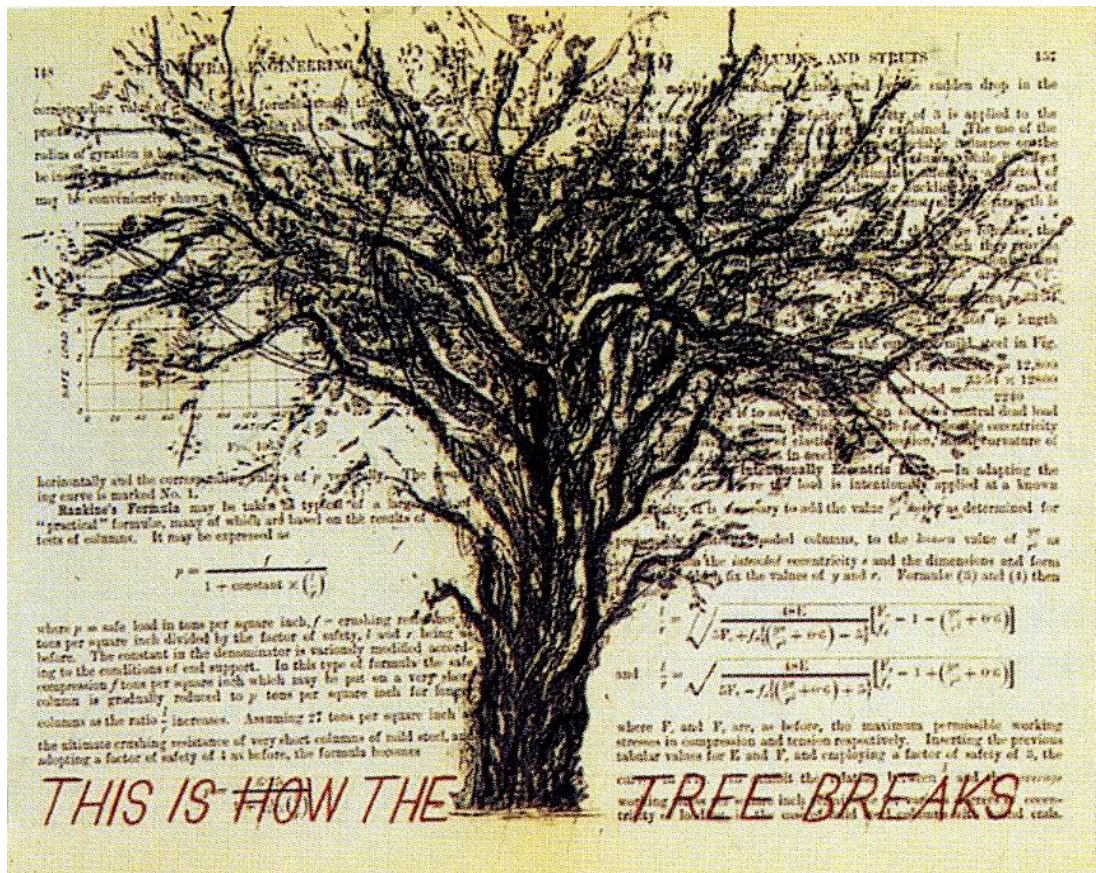


Figure 6.13 *Sleeping on Glass* (Benezra, Boris, Cooke, Sitas and Cameron 2001:134-135).

Figure 6.13 consists of design drawings / architect's drawings of proposed buildings or mines to be built on untouched/virgin landscapes / mounds of ground. The water below is in blue pastel. The water in the one drawing reflects another image that is different to the one that it should be reflecting. Once again this implies a split, and is a reference to the reflexivity of glass. But it is also a reference again to "doublethink", because one has to look quite carefully to see that the images are different to each other. You may not expect the reflection to be "identical", but at least to "mirror" the image above it. The second mound has no

reflection at all, it is only water — this refers to unobtainable / repressed memories. There is a pun of “safer tropics” — avoiding the political reality of South Africa — a reference to South Africa being near the tropics, a free-association would be “topics”. Safer topics would refer to the fact that violence, crime and political uncertainty are the hot topics of all South African conversations — which in turn would be a re-reference to “tropics” as they are known to be climactically hot.



LONGING”: a longing for the past, memories of yesteryear where everything was whole, complete; a longing for peace and tranquility. “Terminal” also refers to “fatalistic” — is Kentridge fatalistic about South Africa, its people and its politics? Is he prophesising the “death” of an ever-elusive democracy? Is he resigned to a post post-apartheid that is riddled with fear, angst, never-ending existential questions about being South African, corruption and emotionally bankrupt politicians? The word “hurt” refers of course to both physiological as well as psychical hurt / trauma, which are major themes in the *Drawings for Projection* series of films, both in terms of experiencing trauma and exorcising the trauma, both of the individual and of the collective.

All of these etchings deal with mirroring and “identical” reproductions / “realistic” interpretations. These works are palimpsests, literally drawn on text, and are polysemic. Until now the concept of “screen memories” has only been mentioned in passing. This section allows for a more in-depth look at the concept.

6.4 Screen memories *Part II*

Sigmund Freud introduced the concept of “screen memories” in 1899 (1899b). A screen memory is “one that comes to mind in the place of, and in order to conceal, an associated but repressed memory” (Burgin 1996:221; cf. Freud 1899b). The screen memory, discussed by Freud early on in his career, is specifically an earlier memory that screens a later event. Freud writes that there is a “retroactive” chronological relation between the screen memory and the repressed memory / content (cited in Burgin 1996:221-222). In later publications Freud suggests that it

is more often an opposite relation: “an indifferent impression of recent dates establishes itself in the memory as a screen memory” (1899b:44), and it is the earlier memory that disappears behind it. Freud also identifies a third type of screen memory “in which the screen memory is connected with the impression that it screens not only by its content but also by contiguity in time: these are contemporary or contiguous screen memories” (1899b:44).

Freud claims that it is characteristic of one’s memory that the reproduction of one’s life as a connected chain of events begins only from one’s sixth or seventh birthday onwards — often even only at age ten and upwards². Memories of incidents prior to these years are fragmentary and unrelated — disjointed, and they very seldom yield any important / significant events. However, one’s earliest memories are the most vivid in sensory intensity, which one’s most recent memories tend to lack.

Freud emphasises three important points:

the agency of sexuality in the formation of screen memories, the role of language – “verbal bridges” – in the construction of mental images and the role of fantasy in the (re)construction of our memories (cited in Burgin 1996:223; cf. Freud 1899b).

In 1899 Freud wrote in his essay *Screen Memories*, wherein he suggests:

[I]t may indeed be questioned whether we have any memories at all from our childhood: memories relating to our childhood may be all that we possess. Our childhood memories show us our earliest years not as they were but as they appeared at the later periods when the memories were aroused. In these periods of arousal, the childhood memories did not, as people are accustomed to say, emerge; they were formed at that time. And a number of motives, with no concern for historical accuracy, had a part in

² Keep in mind Kentridge’s excursion into his fathers’ study at age six — and the shock and horror cemented to his psyche upon seeing photographs of Sharpeville victims.

forming them, as well as in the selection of the memories themselves (1899b:322).

In addition, Freud suggests that the “dream work” ignores waking logic, “replacing disjunction with conjunction, “or” with “and”” (cited in Burgin 1996:265). This too adds a hallucinatory / illusionary feel to dreams / dreaming.

Kentridge’s works in a sense relate directly to Freud’s ideas of “screen memories”. As is distinctive of Kentridge’s works, everything is layered, each previous layer “forgotten” by the inclusion of a new layer. This layering, or “accumulated progress”, as defined by Marshall Deutelbaum (1989), is according to the author of this dissertation, evident in Kentridge’s drawing technique: where one drawing is layered upon another and meanings are layered upon one another. Each layer changes the meaning of the last layer, and prevents it from being seen. In *Johannesburg, 2nd Greatest City after Paris*, for example, in one scene, Mrs. Eckstein is holding a towel, the drawings are slowly changed and the towel becomes a fish. The first image is completely different to the second image — meanings are layered like sediments of sand, or are “archaeological” as Freud suggests³. The first image, of Mrs. Eckstein swathed in a towel, could mean anything from her intending to take a bath, or going swimming, the second meaning, derived from the towel turning into a fish, a more obscure meaning, could be her affiliation with nature. In *Mine*, Kentridge introduces a coffee plunger that literally plunges below the image of Soho Eckstein in his bed, through the bed and linen, to below the earth, turning into a lift shaft as it continues to plunge into the

³ See section three of *Chapter Five*.

depths of a mine. In the first instance, the coffee plunger is just that, a coffee maker used by the middle or upper-middle classes to brew fine, expensive coffee, but then the coffee maker turns into a mine shaft, taking working class, and poor miners into their dank, dark work place. The drawings evolve to have different meanings, the most obvious of which is the upper level. This comprises Soho’s luxurious bed, which is equated with wealth and comfort, and is literally the upper-class or upper stratum of society. While the lower level, that consisting of mines and mine workers, is the lower class or stratum of society. Yet the two strata are distinctly connected by the drawing of the coffer-plunger becoming the shaft. Or it could have quite a different meaning, with the plunger plunging deep into the recesses of Kentridge’s unconscious. Kentridge himself has referred to this “layering”. He refers to his drawings as

an Archimboldo thing, you take a whole range of different items and put them together and you see what creature is there. ... I think that within drawing there is the potential of complete radical change of meaning halfway through ... for hints of meaning to start emerging, at the side, that are vaguely there, then to suddenly push them into the foreground, which corresponds much more to the way one understands the world... Well one makes sense of any situation, picking up clues at the sides and bits of information and forcing that into a realization or understanding or some meaning (Kentridge cited in Kapitza-Meyer 1994:97).

Kentridge’s drawings then are a means of his trying “to come to terms with reality” (Kentridge cited in Kapitza-Meyer 1994:97).

Sigmund Freud also came to the realisation that a repressed memory of something that did not actually occur is as damaging as the repressed fantasy of something that did happen (1899a and 1899b). Ruth Leys agrees, viewing memory in terms

of “psychological space,” which emphasises Freud’s point of view that “‘emotional memories’ may not be memories at all” (1994:623; cf. Leys 1996 and 2000). “The ego is first and foremost a bodily ego; it is not merely a surface entity, but is itself the projection of a surface” (Freud 1923:1-66). Memories might indeed be fabrications, however psychosomatic symptoms are still experienced as real:

[T]he ego is ultimately derived from bodily sensations, chiefly those springing from the surface of the body. It may thus be regarded as a mental projection of the surface of the body, besides as we have seen above, representing the superficies of the body ... (Freud 1927:147-158).

Jennifer Arlene Stone extrapolates: “The ego, for Freudians, is an accumulation of losses, of abandoned object choices whose failure in our lives overrides the psyche” (2003:7). This “loss” is experienced at the very beginning of life, when the newborn baby starts to nurse; s/he licks his/her lips when satiated, repetitiously, through separation and satisfaction. However, after time, desire or eroticism takes its place (Stone 2003). As psychologist K. R. Eissler observed in his earliest writings: “unassuageable yearnings shape our demand beyond satisfaction” (cited in Stone 2003:7).

“Body ego” is Sigmund Freud’s curious term for a speculation — how best to conceive the interface between body and mind? Ontological dilemmas of psyche and *soma* beset René Descartes’ dreams (1984 / 1912 (original 1637)): “I think therefore I am” (“*cogito ergo sum*”) becomes the psychoanalytic trope of above and below, conscious and unconscious of “I dream therefore I am”. Just as Freud later responds with “dismay” in his 1929 letter to Maxime Leroy in which he explains that Descartes’ “dreams from above” are close to the dreamer’s conscious thoughts

and that “there then remain certain parts of the dream about which the dreamer does not know what to say: and these are precisely the parts which belong to the unconscious and which are in many respects the most interesting” (Stone 2003:26-27). Freud regrets that he can achieve only “meagre results” without being able to obtain from the historical dreamer any indications for “in the most favourable cases we explain the unconscious [part] with the help of the ideas below,” such as the “bizarre” and “absurd” element of “a melon from a foreign land,” which might stand for a sexual picture but remains inexplicable without the individual’s / dreamer’s associations (Stone 2003:26-27).

Kentridge’s works are absurd, fantastical, intertextual — he mixes the ordinary with the unlikely / strange. For example in *Mine* there is a scene with Soho Eckstein sleeping peacefully in his bed and on the covers there is a wheel-barrow containing an image of a decapitated head; or him playing with a rhinoceros on his bed. Other works of his are also absurd in their content: Kentridge “puts forward the unrepresentable in presentation” (Lyotard 1990:29; cf. Lyotard 2003). Kentridge’s films mix the “unrepresentable” — brutality and the macabre / grotesque — with the “representable”, that is, the commonplace, such as cars and beds and coffee plungers. The violence exhibited in Kentridge’s work is not gratuitous or exploitative, not “pornographic”. It is however, graphically gory and very disturbing. It is visually both aesthetically pleasing and brutal. The images of people and animals brutalised and hung up in *Faustus in Africa!* and *Ubu and the Truth Commission*, and more recently in the *Black Box / Chambre Noir* are obscene in their transparency, detail and visibility — they are the “more-visible-than-visible”

(Baudrillard cited in Kellner 1989:72). For example, in *History of the Main Complaint* Soho/Felix’s physiological body is presented as “more-visible-than-visible” because the X-rays reveal not body parts, but telephones, and other machinery. Also, in *Ubu and the Truth Commission* the background images of police torture are simultaneously both beautiful and heinous; while the death throes of the female protagonist in *Felix in Exile* are gracefully balletic, shocking and exquisite. The other bodies in *Felix in Exile* are Christ-like — with open wounds weeping blood from their sides, wrists and heads. The seeping blood into soil becomes an emblem of embeddedness, forever staining the land. These juxtaposing images add to the hallucinatory feel of his works. The juxtaposition of these images adds to the hallucinatory feel of his works as they are both surreal and dreamlike in their contradictions (see *Figure 6.16* and *Figure 6.17*).



Figure 6.16 Drawing from *Mine* (Godby 1992:unpaginated).



Figure 6.17 Drawing from *Mine* (Christov-Bakargiev 1999:65).

For the author of this study, it is apparent that Kentridge’s very process of making his films is a form of psychoanalysis in that it allows him to express his unconscious and to free associate.

David Grossman, an Israeli author and lecturer, confronts one with the question of how the “representation of a traumatic past forms personal and collective identity” (2002:42-50). He asks how individuals / society can imagine or recollect a traumatic past that as individuals they have no first hand knowledge of, but that affects one daily, momentarily even (Grossman 2002:42-50)? These questions in turn lead one to the idea of representation. How are mass trauma and personal memory portrayed; and what is the relationship of imagination to history, if any

(Grossman 2002:42-50)? All this in turn raises issues of authenticity, responsibility and authority.

As *Chapter Five* was closed, attention was drawn to David Grossman’s comment, “[I]f one forgets the past, then one is denying its existence and thereby desecrating the existence of the memory of others’ — but being unable to forget the past runs the risk of being completely maimed by it” (Grossman 2002:157; Sicher 2004:268). David Grossman believes that the main character in *See Under: Love*, Momik, who is a second-generation child living under the shadow of the Holocaust, feels it is his duty to write “his family’s suppressed screams into a universal discourse of disaster” (Grossman 2002:45-46; Sicher 2004:269). Can the same be said of Kentridge? For the author of this thesis, based on his themes and portrayals in his films, it is clear that Kentridge does feel the heavy weight of bearing witness to the atrocities of apartheid / colonialisation / histories.

6.5 Conclusion

William Kentridge’s *Drawings for Projection*; art Spiegelman’s (sic) *Maus Volume I* and *Volume II* (1986 / 1991); Joe Kubert’s *Yossel — April 19, 1943* (2003); and, Pascal Croci’s *Auschwitz* (2001); are narratives that challenge one to “imagine the unimaginable through the artifice of art” (Sicher 2004:271). According to Ephraim Sicher, one could claim that these artists present distinctive discourses that dismiss literary and artistic conventions, and that they also present “an artistic vision in which history can be known through fiction and memory can be recovered through fantasy” (Sicher 2004:271; cf. Grossman 1989; Grossman 2002).

While Spiegelman (*sic*), Kubert, and Croci focus on the Holocaust, this observation by Ephraim Sicher is appropriate to describe William Kentridge’s artistic endeavors. However, the questions of representation, aesthetics, ethics and memory remain, and *Chapter Seven* focuses on these questions by drawing on the works mentioned above, as well as others.

To end this chapter, a rather poetic, but apt, description of “memory” is quoted from novelist Salman Rushdie:

‘I told you the Truth,’ I say yet again, ‘memory’s truth, because memory has its own special kind. It selects, eliminates, alters, exaggerates, minimizes, glorifies, and vilifies also; but in the end it creates its own reality, its heterogeneous but usually coherent version of events; and no sane person ever trusts anyone else’s version more than his own’ (1982:211).

CHAPTER SEVEN: QUESTIONS OF MEMORY, REPRESENTATION AND AESTHETICS

This chapter focuses on different artistic mediums and their importance in representing human suffering and tragedy. It concentrates on how artists and filmmakers represent what is thought to be “the un-representable”. From literary works to films and then photography, the chapter attempts to show the significance of these mediums in their role in perpetuating memories and lived experiences. Artistic portrayals of violence unleashed upon the collective and the individual serve to guard against the repetition and condoning of such atrocities. The inclusion of examples of representations, or re-representations, of memory / memories; traumas; and memorialisation might seem an unnecessary excursion. However, as with all qualitative research comparative analyses are of the utmost importance (Christians and Carey 1981). There are several reasons for this. Firstly the comparisons between artistic representations provide further credibility to the researcher’s interpretations and analysis of Kentridge’s films. Secondly, the reference to these comparative examples assists with the clarification of certain features. Thirdly, by making conceptual comparisons, it supports definitions and exacts concepts used throughout this study to interpret Kentridge’s films. In addition to that, this chapter serves to strengthen and contextualise the link between Kentridge’s art and the Holocaust (artistic representations). Therefore, at the centre of this chapter is memory and its often unique and challenging depictions. With regard to memory, Susan Sontag writes rather poignantly in her book *Regarding the Pain of Others*: “[R]emembering is an ethical act, has ethical

value in and of itself. Memory is, achingly, the only relation we can have with the dead” (2003:174).

7.1 Representation

Theodor W. Adorno famously wrote: “[T]o write a poem after Auschwitz is barbaric” (cited in Howe 2003:288; cf. Adorno 1951 / 1991). It is often misquoted but continues to be debated amongst academics and the like (Hirsch and Kacandes 2004; Howe 2003; LaCapra 2003; cf. Adorno 1981:17-34; Adorno 1991:37-54). Adorno later answered this question himself explaining that “consolation necessarily finds its only outlet in art” (cited in Gubar 2004:167; cf. Adorno 1981:17-34; Adorno 1991:37-54). Yet, the question of whether or not art can represent hideous atrocities perpetrated against humankind is a contested question; as is how artists choose to portray these atrocities (Dean 2004; Gubar 2004; Hirsch and Kacandes 2004; LaCapra 2003).

Jennifer Arlene Stone is a psychoanalyst with a private practice in New York who has written extensively on William Kentridge’s work. She extrapolates on Adorno’s last statement: “art’s symbolic strivings against the vacuum, the collapse of symbolization after Auschwitz, are the sole guarantee against culture’s dementia” (2003:63). In this manner, Kentridge believes that art is a cry, ““Alas!” He answers Adorno’s quandary “Alas, there is the lyric!”” (Stone 2003:67; cf. Christov-Bakargiev 1998). Furthermore, Kentridge is quoted in Stone: “[T]here is still poetry after Apartheid” (2003:67). From his statement the author of this thesis has come

to the conclusion that Kentridge is of the opinion that art has its place in perpetuating memory and that carrying on with life after such a tragedy is important. His previous statement is poignant because he has obviously debated and provocatively thought about whether or not one should, or can carry on as before. It is indeed a “quandary” — Kentridge seems to imply that that in itself has poetry about it. The ambiguity is of course that even after the Holocaust, and other atrocities such as the Palestinian or apartheid atrocities, the living do indeed carry on living and creating art. The ability to continue life as before is also something that Kentridge explores in *History of the Main Complaint*. It is mentioned and commented on in *Chapter Five*, but to reiterate briefly: Soho/Felix encounters atrocities and memories of atrocities as he drives along a lonely, empty road¹. Soho/Felix then becomes very ill, lapsing into a “coma” of sorts, where his unconscious attempts to deal with his own hand in such atrocities / actions / complicity. Is it remorse he shows afterwards? Perhaps so, but still, it is him back at his desk, and it is “business as usual”. So whether or not Kentridge identifies with the protagonist or the victim, he seems to admit reluctantly that the living continues to do just that: carry on living. Kentridge has added to Theodor W. Adorno’s quote by stating that he is concerned with “time’s dulling of memory and intense passion” (cited in Christov-Bakargiev 1999:13). Jennifer Arlene Stone also writes, rather relevantly, that William Kentridge’s work is imbued “with “*saudade*,” a Portuguese “yearning” indicative of achieved mourning. ... “*Fado*” intones an

¹ One of the images that Kentridge includes is of a man being beaten by two other men. This is something that he actually witnessed as a child while riding in a car with his grandfather, he clearly remembers this: “shocking image of violence”; incorporating the image into his film (Kentridge cited in Christov-Bakargiev 1998:29); cf. *Chapter Two*.

acceptance of one's "fate" against the lugubrious verdict of German pessimism after Adorno ..." (2003:87). Author Okwui Enwezor has described Kentridge's works as "post-Holocaust" because, he argues, Kentridge's *oeuvre* deals with the "aftermath of a horrific period of history" (cited in Benezra, Boris, Cooke, Sitas and Cameron 2001:33).

Also referring to Theodor W. Adorno's famous statement, Susan Gubar adds that "the idea of writing poetry of such barbarism is repulsive at worst and inane at best" (2004:170). She suggests that poetry, (and read here, by extension all art) has a place in Holocaust remembrance because it is able to articulate a contradiction. It highlights the difficulty that the representation of such horrors is unattainable, yet it also highlights the importance of trying to do so. Perhaps in a mediated form of poetry / art the horrific might be more believable or transmittable than more realistic portrayals? This can be said of Kentridge's works: his traumatic past growing up in a brutal regime of apartheid and his postmemories are represented as fantastical and surreal in his films, yet his work is also authentic, convincing and, yes, even very realistic.

"The past can be seized only as an image," writes Walter Benjamin "and every image of the past that is not recognized by the present as of its own concerns threatens to disappear irretrievably" (1963:255). By dismissing narrative order, by pouncing on specific images of the past, poets (read here artists as well) not only highlight discontinuities, but they engage in the psychological, the intellectual, the

social, the political, ethical and aesthetic elements without attempting to recreate the horrors in their totalities. They basically do not attempt to answer or provide a solution for past iniquities but offer insight where there might be none. They (artists / authors) attempt to show the impossibility of a coherent understandable story / drawing, they instead offer “spurts of vision, baffling but nevertheless powerful pictures of fragmentary scenes unassimilated into an explanatory plot” (Gubar 2004:166). Trauma itself is not experienced as a narrative — but like flashbacks artists provide images that at once testify to its existence and to the fact that an event can defy comprehensibility and understanding. Artist’s images are like those in the unconscious — fragmentary and elusive, yet they exist. Artists’ depiction of trauma is often “an involuntary return to intense feelings about an incomprehensible, incommunicable moment” but in this format the images of the trauma can be revisited in relative safety, trying to deal with it and its consequences without being “silenced by it” (Gubar 2004:166). As Geoffrey Hartman suggests, there is a form of “memory envy”, “whereby those who have not gone through traumatic experiences adopt these experiences, or identify with them” (2004:230; cf. Hartman 1996). This of course is similar to Hirsch’s concept of “postmemory” (1997) cited and discussed in *Chapter Five*.

At the beginning of this chapter, the Adorno conundrum was strongly stated, this section returns to that enquiry. Bella Brodzki claims that the trauma of the Holocaust has become an existential and dominant question / concept of modern existence. How does one describe the indescribable; how does one portray the

unportrayable? (2004:133). By extension, Darfur and apartheid are just two recent (2008) examples where the existential question applies. Imre Kertész, a Holocaust survivor, suggests that were the Holocaust to find a reliable language to describe the indescribable, “wouldn’t this language have to be so terrifying, so lugubrious, that it would destroy those who speak it?” (2002:39; cf. Stark 2004:199). This also refers back to the Frederic Nietzsche quote in *Chapter Five* that comments on “looking into the abyss” (1979a:99). Is Kentridge being destroyed by his portrayals of wicked deeds, or is it a form of catharsis for him? Kentridge’s works are also what Paul Virilio expressly termed “the teletopological puzzle”, that is, “all of these together (photography, cinema, film, television) — ‘together’ not as a totality but as a constantly shifting constellation of fragments” (cited in Burgin 1996:22). The term is useful to apply to Kentridge’s use of a wide array of disparate artistic mediums that he uses in his works. Poet and art critic Rainer Maria Rilke put it thus in his observation on Honoré Balzac’s works: “this kind of drawing is not of contours, but of oscillating transitions” (cited in Stone 2003:73): this is a pertinent description to apply to Kentridge’s films.

However, although this study has argued that Kentridge’s works portray the indescribable authentically and realistically, (using surreal imagery at times)² it can

² This is possibly more apt when discussing Kentridge’s films as his works are both “dreadful” (hideous images) and “consoling” (references to remorse and social responsibility). His works are especially “hallucinatory”, considering the surreal aspects / images in them. To quote Alfred Jarry, who was writing about his play *Ubu Roi*: “[R]ecounting understandable things merely burdens the spirit and falsifies memory, whereas the absurd invigorates the spirit and engages memory” (cited in Cooke 2001:56). Kentridge’s films, according to Ari Sitas, are “playfully using all the post-dadaist and surrealist techniques to disturb and animate his imagery” (2001:63).

still be argued that his various mediums of doing so are in fact too fantastical to be credible. Pre-empting this argument, this chapter looks at the different mediums that Kentridge makes use of to portray the “lugubrious” (Kertész 2002:39; see *Figure 7.1*). The chapter cites previous studies and examples that have been artistically created in a similar vein, thereby giving further credibility (through comparability) to the authenticity of Kentridge’s *oeuvre* and the themes that it portrays. Firstly, the chapter looks at writing / drawing artists; secondly, the medium of film, and thirdly, photography. After all, Kentridge’s works are truly a “teletopological puzzle”, as Paul Virilio would put it (cited in Burgin 1996:2).



Figure 7.1 Drawing from *Mine* (Godby 1992:unpaginated).

7.2 Re-representations

7.2.1 Artists / authors

The storytelling or novelistic approach to the historical past, which acknowledges our continuing distance from it, becomes less about representation and more about “memory, mourning, and reconstruction in different interpretive communities” (DeKoven Ezrahi 2004:61). Furthermore,

[I]n different interpretive communities, the search for a unique language adequate to unprecedented experience has yielded to a search for recovery of artistic conventions as a way to restore social order in the wake of cataclysm and to reclaim a purchase on the future that is continuous with the pre-traumatic past (DeKoven Ezrahi 2004:61).

Most importantly, in Israel the idea of authenticity in representing the Holocaust has been replaced by what DeKoven Ezrahi defines as “empathetic projection” (2004:62). Kentridge’s films do just that: through his empathy and identification, Kentridge portrays the dreadfulness of apartheid in a unique cinematic and artistic way.

Some academics / authors / theorists are critical of the Holocaust purists. Purists look back to the crematoria, and insist that authenticity, authority and representation are to be protected. For them Auschwitz becomes “the sole determinant and ultimate extinguisher of meaning” (DeKoven Ezrahi 2004:64). They see the past — suspended / fixed temporarily and spatially — which has resulted in “a culture of the unsayable, the elusive, the inscrutable, and the immutable” (DeKoven Ezrahi 2004:64). Is this not defeatist in a sense, since who is to decide what is an authentic portrayal?

This section focuses on the following three authors / artists: art spiegelman (*sic*)³, Pascal Croci and Joe Kubert. Like Kentridge they too have made use of animation to portray tragedies.

7.2.1.1 art spiegelman (*sic*)

There are varied ways of witnessing trauma, with one such perspective being ‘generational’. Since the early 1970s, much research has dwelt on the effects of “what may be unbound, unintegrated, unshared massive traumatization” (Brodzki 2004:132). How relevant is language to communicate such a legacy? And by extension, how relevant is art to communicate such a heritage? Efraim Sicher (2004), in his essay *Postmemory, Backshadowing, Separation: Teaching Second-generation Holocaust Fiction*, asks the question of whether or not the children of survivors of the Holocaust have the right to their and their parents’ stories: as “second-generation witnesses” (Bauman 1998; Berger 1998; Sicher 2004). Are they claiming a martyrdom not their own? Froma I. Zeitlin believes that such writers (read “artists” here) “represent the past through modes of enactment — even reanimation — through which the self, the ‘ego’, the ‘one who was not there’, now takes on a leading role as a active presence” (Zeitlin 1998:6; cf. Sicher 2004; Zeitlin 2001). Efraim Sicher believes that “absent memory” is still made of angst and other post-traumatic stress-related symptoms (see *Chapter Six*). As of now, there are no known statistics on whether or not second generation individuals

³ art spiegelman (*sic*) specifically spells his name with lower case letters, although it is not known why, out of respect for his choice, this study does so too.

share a common pathology, and it is almost impossible to gauge just how much post-traumatic stress they have inherited from their parents / siblings. “Generational transference” of traumatic memory is more than likely to be affected by both national memory and the local environs (Bar-On 1995; Fox 1999; Hass 1996; Sicher 2004). Second generation children, as well as their social / age groups (not of biological relations to victims / survivors), are expected, and even forced, “to imagine their way from a common post-Holocaust existence into a past of which they have no personal memory” (Sicher 2004:263; cf. Grossman 1989 / 2002).

These generations have “inherited ghosts in the family cupboard” (Rosembaum 1999a:59-60; cf. Sicher 2004), and history has “maimed them before birth” (Rosembaum 1999b; Sicher 2004:263). Melvin J. Bukiet, a writer and a child of survivors, has commented that “[F]or anyone who wasn’t there, on either side of the barbed wire, Jew or German, thinking about the Holocaust is really an act of the imagination. All we know is how little we know” (2002:16).

art spiegelman (*sic*) wrote and drew a two-volume book: *Maus: My Father Bleeds History Volume I* (1986), and *A Survivor’s Tale Volume II* (1991), which details the legacy of the survivors’ son: himself, as “Artie” (the protagonist and cartoon / graphic son; see *Figures 7.2 — 7.7*). This is a radical form of communication — an attempt to share his father’s oral testimony about his survival of the Holocaust with

the rest of the world — a graphic novel of trauma as an uncomprehendable devastation. *Maus* contains episodes and dialogue that

expose, examine, and problematize from every conceivable perspective, through every technical and intellectual resource available to spiegelman, especially the instrument of mordant irony, the complex phenomenon of familial transmission and inheritance (Brodzki 2004:132; cf. spiegelman 1986 / 1991).

art spiegelman's *Maus* is about how the second generation reworks the images of a wrecked past. It is less about his parents' original trauma and more about the son's reworking of that trauma. James E. Young suggests that spiegelman's *Maus* is a work of "received history — a narrative hybrid that interweaves both events of the Holocaust and the ways that they are passed down to us" (Young 2000:15; cf. Young 2004). spiegelman's reworking is an "historicizing process" — the focus is not on the events themselves but rather on how one recovers these events, which results in one being aware of what s/he does / does not understand (Bathrick 2004:297). *Maus* is a hybrid, a montage of double narration, sub-plots and contradictions (spiegelman 1986 / 1991). Andreas Huyssen posits that *Maus* is "an estrangement effect in the service of 'mimetic approximation'". For example, the animal drawings / depictions suggest a possible political allegorisation: Germans as cats, Jews as mice, and Poles as pigs (Huyssen 2000:28-44; cf. Huyssen 2003). Through this inversion of reality and a reworking / re-imagining of such events / types, the imagery becomes expatriated from its origins; "it is not an authentic replication of the real" (Bathrick 2004:298). By this one assumes Bathrick is stating that they are not identical reproductions, but representations. Artists like spiegelman and Claude Lanzmann (who made the film *Shoah*) are

committed to finding new and innovative ways of visualising the Holocaust; this is based on the belief that in order to remember one needs to see and work through the past. They serve as examples that there is no one “true and all-encompassing visualization” of the past (Bathrick 2004:298). The same can be said of Kentridge’s films. His *Drawings for Projection* series provide his audience with a new and unique way of viewing apartheid.

Memorial books, or *yizkor*, are a form of survivor testimony — small volumes of multi-authored accounts in the form of notes, poems, maps, drawings, photographs. They are all an attempt not only to encapsulate the life of a community before the Holocaust, but also an attempt at preserving first-hand accounts of the horrors of the war. These memorial books have given rise to post-memorial (read here “postmemory”; cf. Hirsch 1997) books — texts that are endeavours between the survivor and others — often second generation family members. Examples are Spiegelman’s *Maus* (1986 / 1991) and Alina Bacall-Zwirn and Jared Stark’s *No Common Place* (1999). Both capture the memory of others, and the relationships that evolve between the teller and the hearer of these experiences. Jared Stark believes that these post-memorial books are an insistence “that witnessing can and should be a collective endeavour, an endeavour that does not simply enshrine the past but that recognizes its abiding presence” (2004:202).

Yet Stephen Tabachnick identifies *Maus* not as a memoir, but as an “autobiographical graphic novel” (1993:154-162). He arrives at this conclusion by asserting that Spiegelman recounts the documentary-biography of his father, Vladek Spiegelman, as a journey of discovery from his biological roots to his psychological and ethnic foundations. This journey begins with historical knowledge / facts but ends up with a knowledge that is no longer unconscious or covert, but “active and personal” (Tabachnick 1993:154).

Maus is the voicing of a survivor’s muteness which stresses the importance of the “communicability of repressed memory and the efficacy of artistic ventriloquism” (Morahg 1999:457-479; Sicher 2004:267). In *Maus*, Spiegelman transposes the categories of victim and survivor. Such a “transposition enacts past trauma as if it were present, bringing order to the chaos of history as well as internalizing the identities of both perpetrators and victims” (Kestenberg 1982:148-149; Sicher 2004:267).

This internalisation of course, runs the risk of being relegated to moral relativism, but it could also be seen as the unlocking and introduction of Primo Levi’s “gray zone” (*sic*) of the Holocaust “where there are no clear-cut ethical choices” (Levi 1998:36; cf. Levi 1996 and 1998; Sicher 2004:268).

This study suggests the following observations: in his comic books Spiegelman portrays his own insecurities — at once guilty and suffering from angst. How does

he compete with an immortalised and ever-enduring brother he never knew? Would “I” have endured; what if “I” had not survived; and how might “I” have defied death; how do “I” contend with such martyrdom (cf. Brodzki 2004)? Discussing his guilt with his wife, spiegelman makes a statement, which the author of this study believes, reveals his real obsession with his inheritance, despite his denial: “Don’t get me wrong. I wasn’t obsessed with this stuff ... It’s just that sometimes I’d fantasize Zyklon B coming out of our shower instead of water” (spiegelman 1991:16; see *Figure 7.6*).

It is intriguing to note just how similar and dissimilar spiegelman and Kentridge’s works are. That they are both animated is obvious; whether you want to term the one cartoon-like and the other animated, whether the one is in hand-drawn pencil and the other hand-drawn charcoal, the one a graphic novel(s) the other animated film(s), are all really technical details of a dis / similar kind. They are however expressions of guilt and (post)memories — their own and others. That they have chosen to draw “their experiences” shows an intimacy and a desire to exorcise or own their own guilt and compliance in these tales. Whether you want to academicitise and psychologise and name their guilt as survivor guilt, guilt by association, generational guilt, upper middle-class guilt or even relative guilt, their guilt is apparent. That spiegelman says that he was not obsessed with his parents’ stories is in the opinion of the author of this dissertation, a form of denial, a way of processing his guilt. Extrapolating from this, the same can be said of Kentridge’s films, they too are a form of processing his guilt.

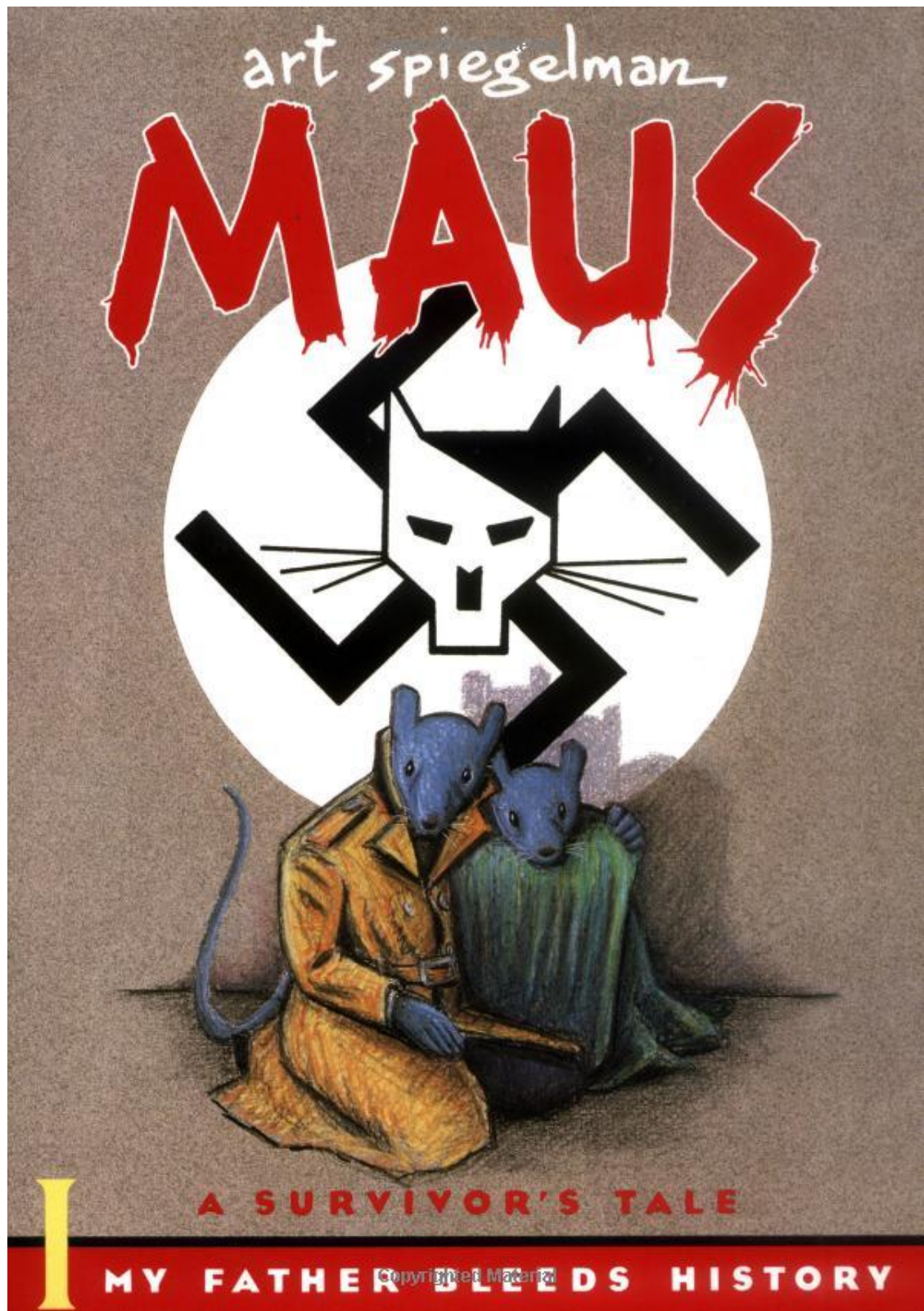


Figure 7.2 *Maus: A Survivor's Tale. My Father Bleeds History. Volume I* (spiegelman 1986: the front cover).

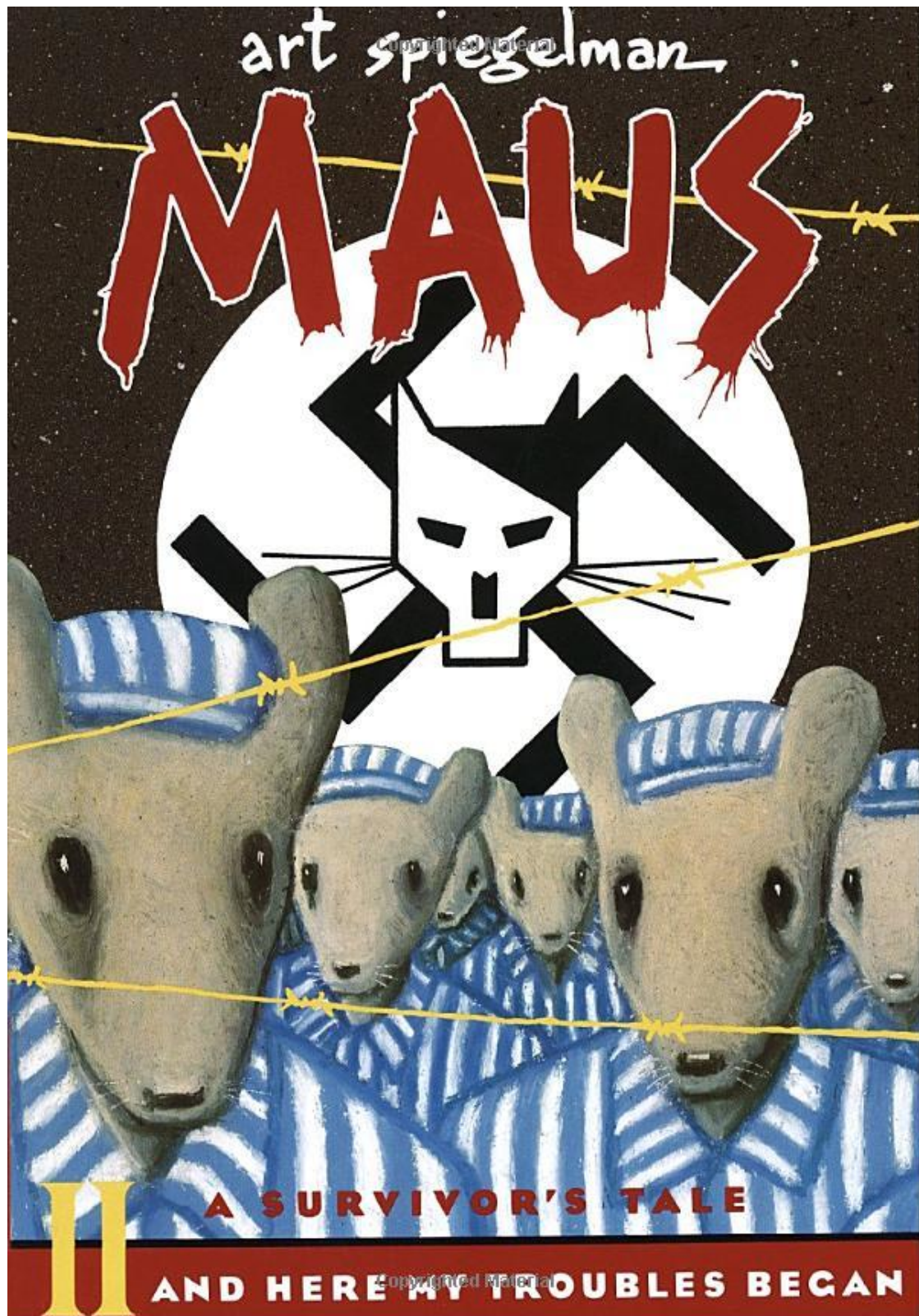


Figure 7.3 *Maus: A Survivor's Tale. And Here my Troubles Began. Volume II.* (spiegelman 1991: the front cover).

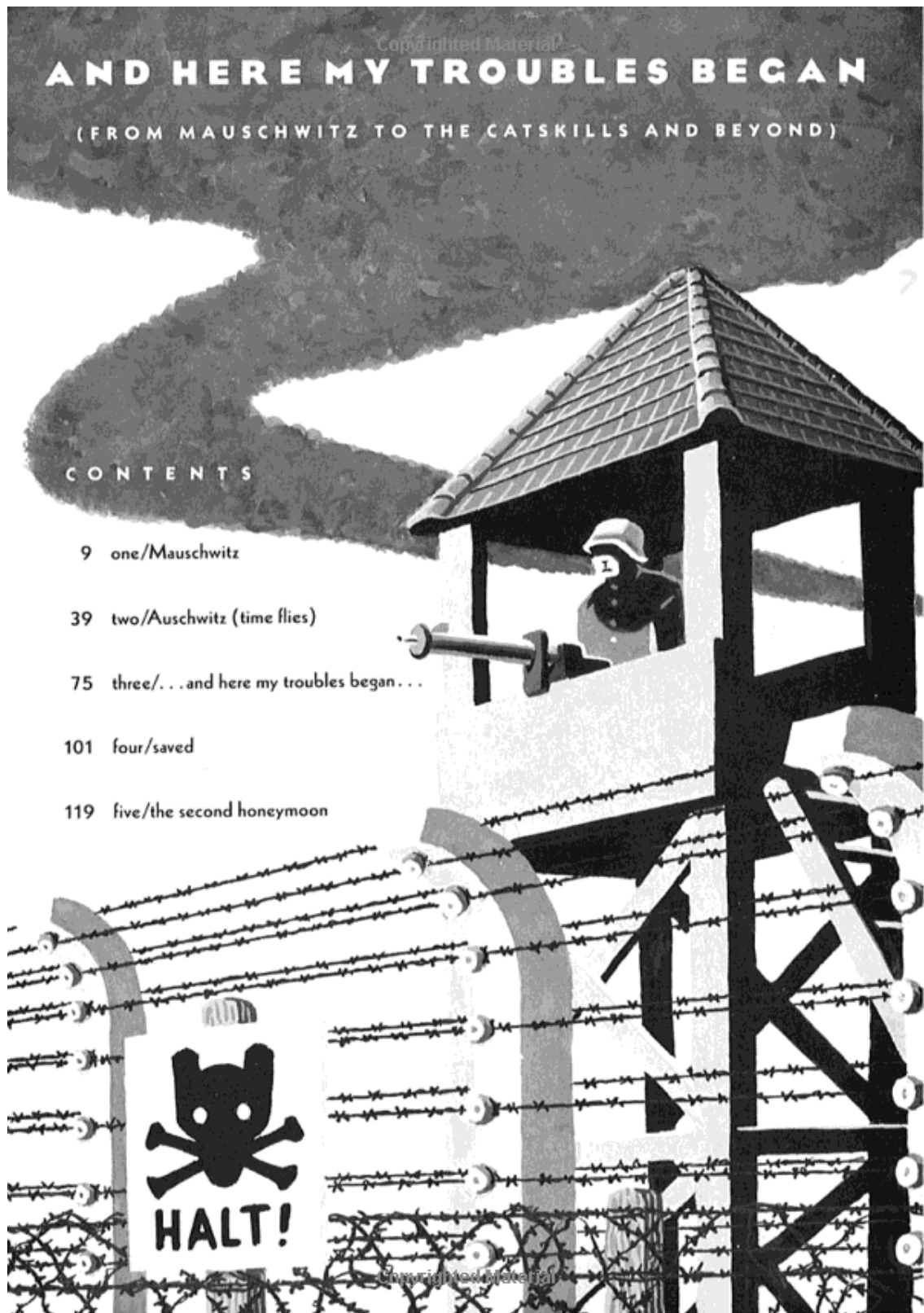
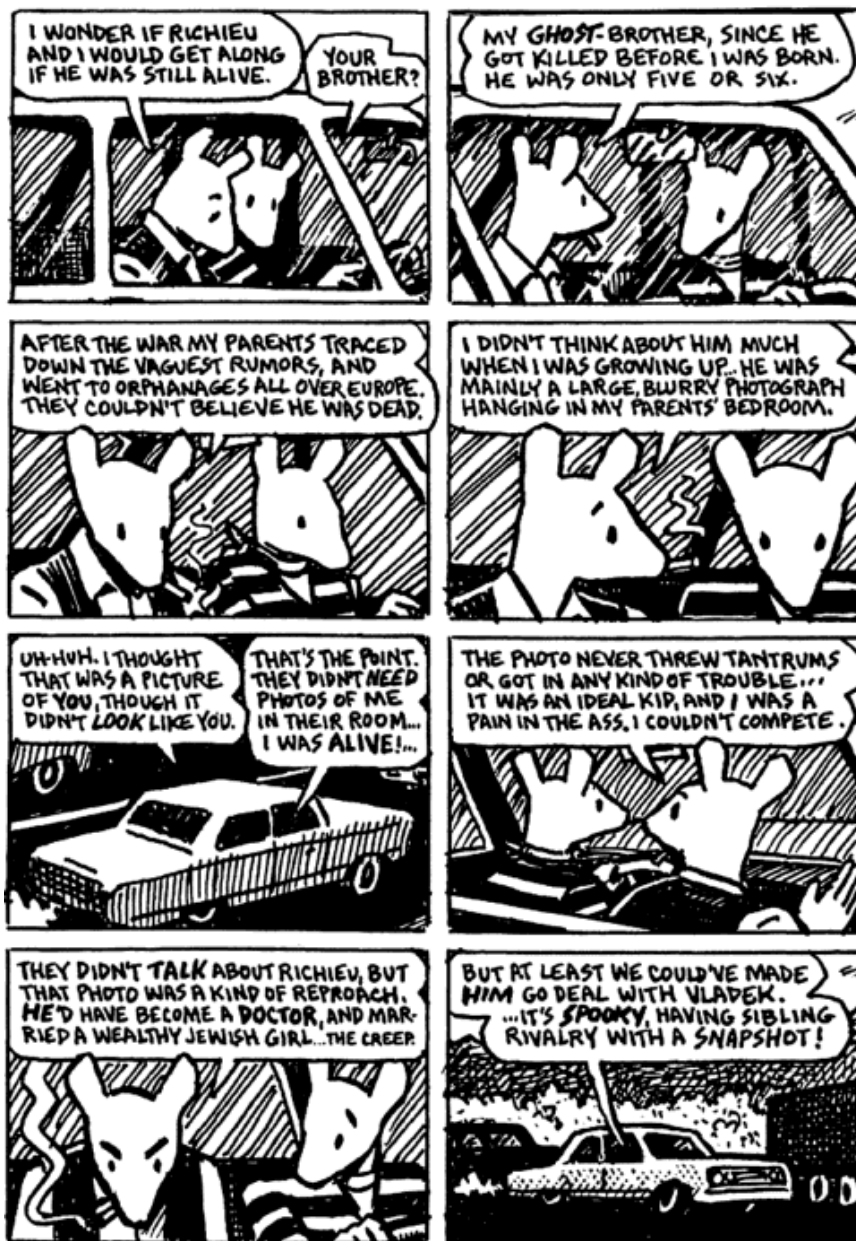


Figure 7.4 *Maus: A Survivor's Tale. And Here my Troubles Began. Volume II.* (spiegelman 1991:contents page: unpaginated).



15

Figure 7.5 *Maus: A Survivor's Tale. And Here my Troubles Began. Volume II.* (spiegelman 1991:15).



16

Figure 7.6 *Maus: A Survivor's Tale. And Here my Troubles Began. Volume II.* (spiegelman 1991:16).

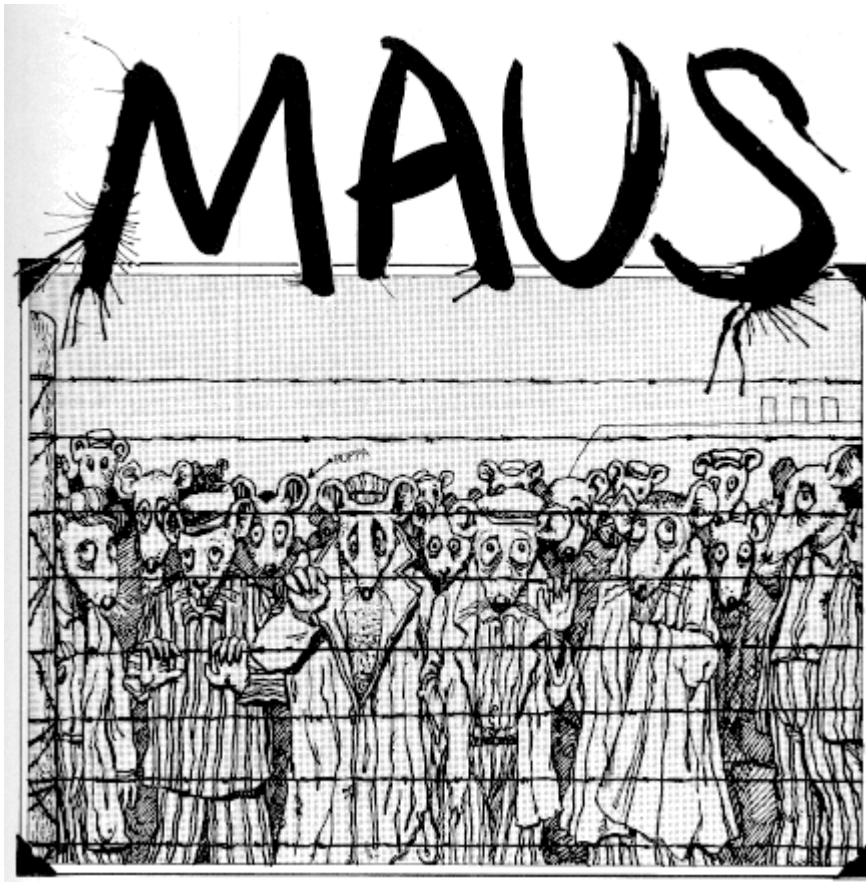


Figure 7.7 *Maus: A Survivor's Tale. And Here my Troubles Began. Volume II.* (spiegelman 1991: prologue page: unpaginated).

7.2.1.2 Pascal Croci

Dori Laub, in his essay *Bearing Witness; or, The Vicissitudes of Listening* (2003:221-229) warns of self-defence mechanisms, like denial, that often come into play when exposed to death narratives. However, there are other psychological and physical feelings that also present themselves, such as sympathy, empathy, extreme anger, and most importantly, “identification” (Laub 2003:221-229). Pascal Croci, born in 1961, researched his topic for five years before producing the graphic novel / book of pencil sketches, titled simply

Auschwitz (2005). He writes / draws of the experiences of a married couple, survivors of the death camp, where their only daughter was murdered. The story finds them in the middle of a civil war in the former Yugoslavia in 1993. They are waiting their execution as traitors, and while they wait they remember their past in Auschwitz. Once again, through the emotion of empathy and identification, author and artist Croci has created a brilliant portrayal of experiences not his own. Through the unconventional medium of pencil sketches he documents history realistically and devastatingly, and also authentically (see *Figures 7.8 — 7.11*).

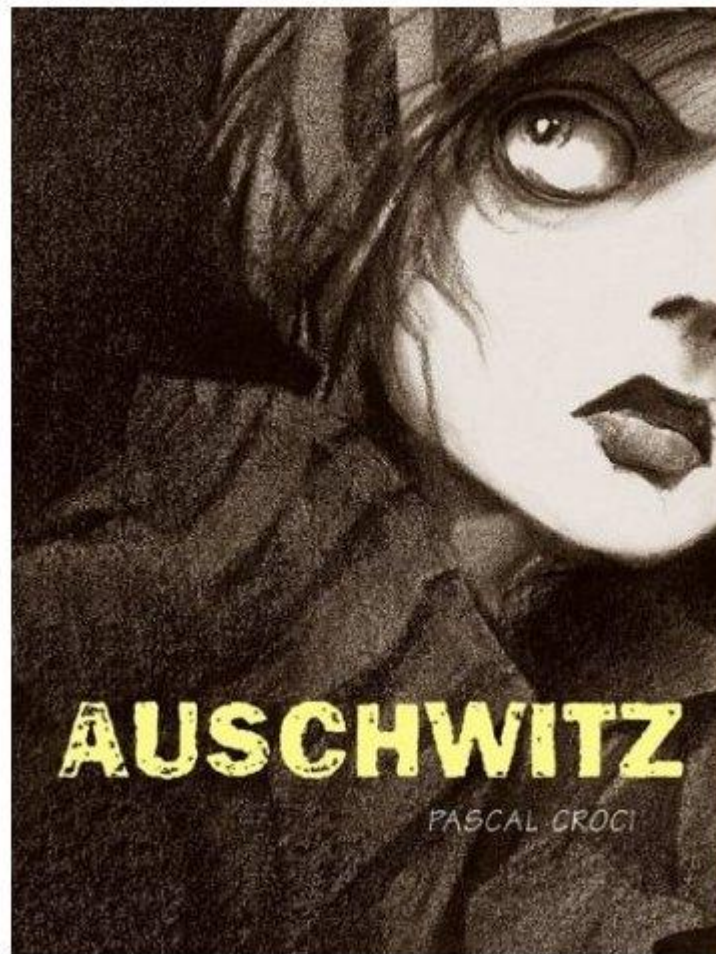


Figure 7.8 Auschwitz (Croci 2004: the front cover).



Figure 7.9 Auschwitz (Crocchi 2004:18).



Figure 7.10 *Auschwitz* (Crocchi 2004:56).

repertoire of art. Haunted by the annihilation of the Jews and based on the descriptions of his neighbours and family friends, Kubert finally decided to pen and draw (in pencil) an alternate version of history, one where his family does not emigrate and he experiences the degradation and dehumanisation of the war firsthand. He situates himself in the middle of the Warsaw ghetto as a thirteen year old with a gift for drawing. His gift saves him from being deported to Auschwitz, but not his family. The fate of his family and news of the death camps filter back to him. He decides to fight back and takes part in the famous Warsaw uprising, beginning on April 19 1943, hence the title of the book. His sketchbook art has a similar “feel” to it as Kentridge’s work does. Rough, jagged, unprocessed, and sometimes incomplete, the sketches are realistic and portray and express those experiences of ghettoised Jews — hunger, bewilderment, shock and trauma (see *Figures 7.12 — 7.14*). Placing himself at the centre of the story, he personalises the narrative, making it easy to identify and sympathise with him.



Figure 7.12 Yossel — April 19, 1943 (Kubert 2003: the front cover).



Figure 7.13 Yossel — April 19, 1943

(Kubert 2003:2).



Figure 7.14 Yossel — April 19, 1943 (Kubert 2003:54).

Once again here is a hand-drawn graphic novel filled with postmemories, beautiful and horrifying all at once. Saul Friedländer believes that it is essential to represent the unrepresentable, even if doing so “transgresses the boundaries of the permissible and tests unconventional representational and conceptual categories” (1992a:2-3; cf. Sicher 2004).

He argues that in doing so, self-identification becomes possible and the conspiracy of generational silence ends (Friedländer 1992:2-3; cf. Friedländer 1992a, 1992b and 1993; Sicher 2004:265). Kubert’s *Yossel — April 19, 1943*; Spiegelman’s *Maus*; Croci’s *Auschwitz*; and Kentridge’s *Drawings for Projection* series do just that. Their portrayals of horror and all that is associated with that repulsion transcend the ordinary and the prosaic, and in doing so not only do they bear witness to experiences not their own, they reach audiences that might not normally be exposed to such experiences. Their unconventionality makes these works unique and therefore memorable, provoking discussion and the raising of questions that are outside the norm. They catch one off guard.

These artists, including Kentridge, are all remarkable. Not only are their art works exquisite, the tales told are heinous, fascinating and poignant (and even sometimes humorous). The fact that these artists / writers allow us a glimpse into their postmemories, their unconscious minds, is astonishing. How they convey / represent these stories / (post)memories / experiences is also extraordinary. But most significant of all is their ability to empathise, extrapolate and identify with

experiences too hideous to bear / contemplate. In a materialistic, alienating contemporary society, that is the most exceptional / noteworthy / significant of all. Having discussed the (post)memory representations of three authors, this chapter now turns its focus to the medium of film and (post)memory.

7.2.2 Film and postmemory

In 1992 documentary film maker David MacDougall wrote an essay entitled *Films of Memory*. He claims that the value of films of memory lies in the ability of film “to leave representation behind and to confront the viewer once again with the primary stimuli of physical experience” (1992:267-269; cf. Burgin 1996). Furthermore,

[A] residue of a clearly *physical* nature remains in film images which are not available in verbal narratives, and its importance should not be underestimated. Film images may be reinterpreted in a variety of new contexts, but the unalterable record of appearance and place contained in them may ultimately prove to have a more profound effect upon our “memory” of history than the interpretations we attach to them (1992:267-269).

This is so apposite for Kentridge’s works: his physical remnants or traces of charcoal are interpreted one way and then when he makes changes to that very drawing, it is interpreted another way, yet it is still the “same” drawing.

Claude Morhange-Bégué in her book *Chambert: Reflections from an Ordinary Childhood* (2000) is an autobiography that focuses on her separation from her mother at an early age: the arrest of her mother by the Gestapo. She reconstructs the scene, going over it again and again, throughout the autobiography.

According to Bella Brodzki this is the same as a “traumatic flashback” (2004:131). The autobiography, written many years after the incident, indicates the incommensurability of language to describe the indescribable — the mental image is so vivid but she cannot remember or conjure up the right words to describe the incident — there is, as Brodzki points out, a “disjunctive relation of image and language to memory” (2004:131; cf. Morhange-Bégué 2000). A play by the name of *The Story I am about to Tell* was written about the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (Christov-Bakargiev 1998). It was fairly unique because it included three witnesses that had presented evidence to the TRC. The play consisted of them re-telling their testimonies every night before an audience. These survivors retold their hideous experiences. However, one night during a performance, one witness forgot his lines, despite the fact that this was his own testimony. William Kentridge wrote: “[T]he most moving moment for me was when the survivor of three years on death row had a lapse of memory. How could he forget his own story?” (Kentridge cited in Christov-Bakargiev 1998:129). This incident supports what Brodzki has claimed; and highlights how memory can fail one. The witnesses are describing memories of memories of memories, every night, yet there is bound to be a lapse in memory at some stage.

In the individual's memory actual events mix with fantasies as well as with fragments of memories from photographs, films and television broadcasts. Sociologist Marie-Claude Taranger wrote an essay in 1991 which documents an oral history project (over four hundred recorded interviews). Her essay records

that there is a universal tendency for one's personal history to be intermingled with memories of films and other productions of the media (cited in Burgin 1996). She writes that: the function of the film is clear: it completes life; it fills the holes in life. It allowed the narrators to see — "it allows them today to recount — events which they did not personally encounter, fragments of History (*sic*) which are not part of their own history" (cited in Burgin 1996:226). Taranger's results are similar to the psychoanalytical stance on screen memories. For example, one might say that a particular scene from a film "in which the parents of the young heroine are killed when they place their bodies between her and the German guns — has come to serve the narrator as a screen memory, representing the repressed fantasy of the death of her own parents" (cited in Burgin 1996:228; cf. *Chapter Six* of this thesis for details on Sigmund Freud's concept of "screen memories").

There is another case where the personal witness has appropriated the contents of another individual's life: a narrator provides detailed descriptions of conditions in the concentration camps. Conversely, in this case, the narrator had never been to a concentration camp herself. However, her brother had been incarcerated in a concentration camp in Poland during the WWII. Upon his return, he never once spoke of the conditions he experienced there to his sister. Upon his father's death he cut all ties off with his sister. Taranger's insight is as follows: "[T]he borrowed speech and images have clearly come to fill the absence of brotherly speech, and of the brother himself" (cited in Burgin 1996:228). Furthermore, she made

observations about: “[M]emories of facts [mixed] with memories of images, or of words, and even with memories of memories” (cited in Burgin 1996:228). Also,

[F]rom such heterogeneous psychical materials, the individual narrator would reconstruct her or his hybrid personal history — imposing a coherent narrative order on the discontinuous fragments (cited in Burgin 1996:228).

Victor Burgin (1996:229) draws attention to the similarity to Sigmund Freud’s “secondary revision”. Freud suggested that “the delusion owes its convincing power to the elements of historical truth which it inserts in the place of rejected reality” (cited in Burgin 1996:229).

It seems that the fictional passages of recorded history are given credibility by the passages of actually experienced events, creating a coherent narrative. One of her results posits that film serves not only as a source of memory but is also a source of authority. “Authority” here is taken from the wide societal / communal character of an experience, as if the belief “we all saw it” makes it “the truth” (Burgin 1996:229; cf. *Chapter Eight* of this thesis for the section on history and memory).

Marie-Claude Taranger, on the basis of her empirical evidence, concludes that authenticity should be viewed in other than binary terms of “true” and “false”:

[I]t is no longer conceivable to consider only the exactitude of facts or the sincerity of witnesses. It is also necessary to take into account in all their complexity the procedures which preside at the construction of the story ... Against the illusion of a simple past, which would only have to be recovered, there is thus imposed the necessity of bringing to light the multiple and changing relations which ceaselessly produce interference, in an infinite play of repetitions and variations, between the voices and the images of the

individual and the group, of a past and of its futures (cited in Burgin 1996:229).

Psychoanalyst Judith Butler writes similarly:

[W]hat are called “moments” are not distinct and equivalent units of time, for the “past” will be the accumulation and congealing of such “moments” to the point of their indistinguishability (1993:245).

However, it will also consist of that which is refused from construction, the “domain of the repressed, forgotten, and the irrecoverably foreclosed” (1993:245).

Concurring with Taranger, Victor Burgin states that the “shape-shifting hybrid objects that coalesce in psychical space from the mnemonic debris of films, photographs, television shows, and other sources of images” (1996:239), are of interest.

These “hybrid objects” are situated in part in an imaginary world and in part in a real world. Marie-Claude Taranger’s study attests to our constant ability to confuse ourselves with others, fictive and real. “Identification is the privileged mechanism by which other histories and memories become our own” (Burgin 1996:239). William Kentridge’s films are “hybrids”: concoctions created out of his memories and others’, with the use of photographs, films and other visual aids / images.

Film is an important medium to expose tragedies and to raise questions. It also has a far-reaching effect — engaging an audience who might not normally have access to, or interest in, international atrocities.

With regard to aesthetic representation and considering whether or not the Holocaust / genocidal atrocities / images of apartheid / Palestine should be portrayed by the visual / artistic / fine arts is invariably linked to the question of how one would attempt to do so.

David Bathrick, in an attempt to address this question / ethical crisis, gives the example of the nine-and-a-half hour film entitled *Shoah*, which was made by Claude Lanzmann. He believes that this film works through the past images by both “repudiating” and “reclaiming” the Holocaust image (2004:294). Lanzmann himself expressly states that this “cinematic treatise is not a documentary and is not representational” (1991:96). Rather, all the interviews of the survivors that he films, both perpetrator and victim alike (he also includes interviews of secondary witnesses) are not intended to recover memory but “to explore the process of reconstructing and reliving the past in the present” (Bathrick 2004:295). Claude Lanzmann refers to his film as “imageless images,” “because what we see on the screen is more absence of an image than an attempted replica of the unspeakable deed” (cited in Bathrick 2004:295; cf. Lanzmann 1991; 2004). Furthermore, this “absence” is referred to by Gertrud Koch as an “elision which marks the boundary

between what is aesthetically and humanly imaginable and the unimaginable dimension of the annihilation” (1989:96).

The belief that an artist has undeviating and complete access to the visual portrayal of an incident(s) is challenged by Lanzmann. He and his cinematic masterpiece serve to “remind us that there can be no full presence but only the marking of the past as object of reconstruction based on traces and traces of traces” (Bathrick 2004:295).

In addition, Bathrick states that “[T]he traces in *Shoah* are sites of memory in the present — the pans of the rich, green fields of Treblinka and Auschwitz today”; these sites of memory defy / dispute imagination — the challenge is to imagine creatively, to transcend, the very “normalcy of these traces in order to produce or even hallucinate the horror of what was” (2004:295-296; cf. the introduction of this chapter). Artist C. K. Williams visited Auschwitz, where he was stunned by the empty barracks, the empty crematoria — this was not what he had imagined — yet it is through memoirists that he can imagine what it was like because the actual site does not deliver any real idea / imagery of what it had been like there. It is through the different characters / individuals who wrote (and assumingly artists who artistically represented their experiences / memories) about their experiences that one is able to glean a realistic image of what it was like (1999:10). This dissertation puts forward the author’s opinion that Auschwitz has been sanitised in a way — and in a sense cleansed. These are just ordinary buildings that belie

what really happened there. Gertrud Koch believes that the film *Shoah*, which defies chronology and a pre-given path, is less a documentary or historical epic, and is more a piece of modern art, “drawing its force from the affirmation that art is not representation but presentation, not reproduction but expression” (1989:20). In other words, one can go beyond representation, and engagement with the evil of apartheid should be one of expression over representation. Theodor W. Adorno himself wrote similarly: “[P]erennial suffering has as much right to expression as the tortured have to scream ... hence it may have been wrong to say that no poem could be written after Auschwitz” (1951 / 1991 / 2003:283). Linked to the concept of film is the concept of voyeurism and spectator identification, which will now be investigated.

7.2.2.1 Voyeurism and spectator identification

Jean-Paul Sartre’s theory of consciousness is that consciousness cannot grasp itself (1957). Sartre’s book *Being and Nothingness* (1957) grapples with this very concept. Reflection or categorisation turns the subject into an object. Because subjects do not have fixed characteristics, the moment they try to categorise themselves, they become nothing more than a definition, pigeonholed and limited. Sartre warns of individuals going to the extreme of defining themselves as a fixed set of categories, so that they are then perceived as pure nothingness. However, no representation can capture one entirely. It is the poser that Sartre has tried to deal with: one can neither be totally defined; neither can one escape all definition (Sartre 1957). One is the quest for oneself. Are Kentridge’s films — based on his

image / representation — a quest for his consciousness? Does he see himself as others see him? Does he draw / represent himself as Soho/Felix as he thinks others see him, or as he sees himself, a mirror of one's self? Are his films a mirror for his own subjectivity? Kentridge's subjectivity is riddled with guilt, remorse, responsibility and mourning / loss / death. It is significant to note then that in the last film of the *Drawings for Projection* series, *Tide Table*, Soho/Felix is represented as all alone, alienated and cut off from the rest of his family and the rest of the world (see *Figure 7.15*).



Figure 7.15 Drawing from *Tide Table* (Alemani 2006:92).

According to Victor Burgin (1996:29), individuals inhabit two separate worlds: the “internal” — the mental and private world — and the “external”, that is, the public

and physical world. Of course, psychoanalysis has provided one with the theory of the unconscious (Freud 1915 / 1991b). Kentridge presents us with both his “internal” and “external” — references to the unconscious (“internal”), such as the drawings of the insides of his brain; and images of everyday items realistically portrayed (the “external”), such as the bakelite telephones, the typewriters and even tea cups and coffee-plungers (see *Figures 7.16 — 7.22*). This is, for the writer of this thesis, another element of “*fortuna*”, as defined by Kentridge (see *Chapter Five* for more details). Ari Sitas describes Kentridge’s “*fortuna*” as “spontaneous inventiveness, even anarchy, and a relishing of the accidental, the transformative (in its literal sense), but there is also [a] discriminating mind that channels the energy into meaningful statement” (2001:63).

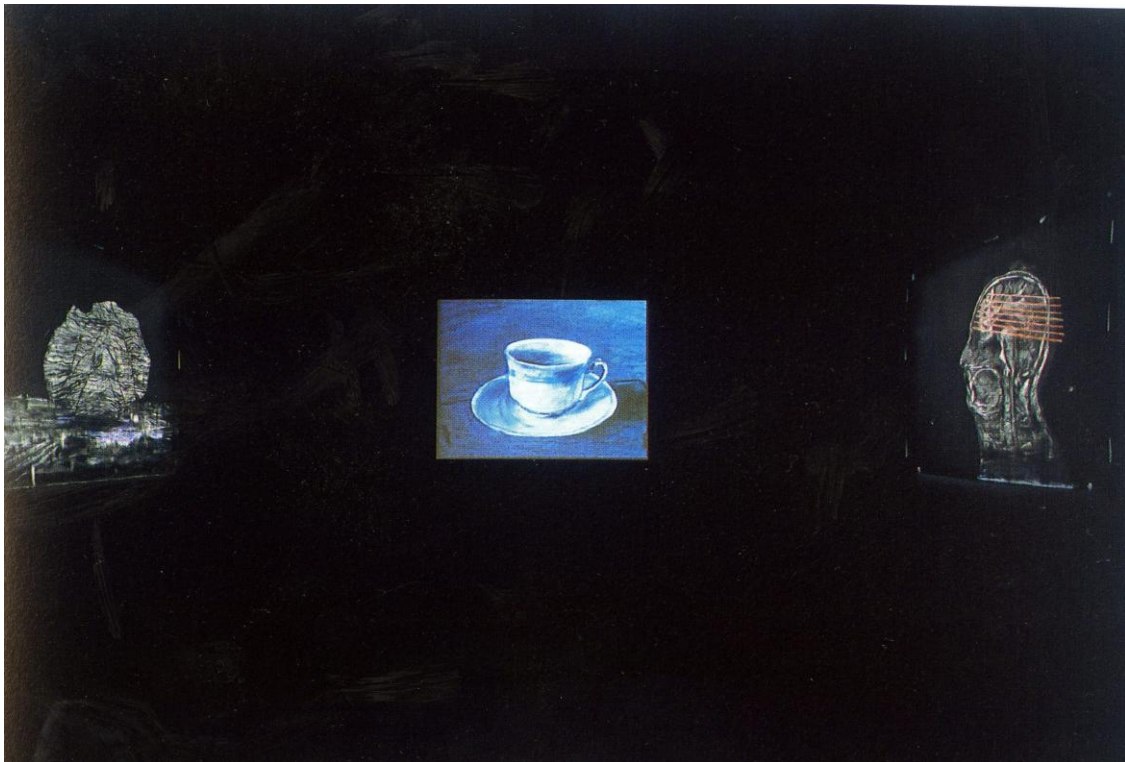


Figure 7.16 Photograph of installation that exhibited drawings from the film *WEIGHING ... and WANTING* (Christov-Bakargiev 1998:135).



Figure 7.17 Photograph of the installation that exhibited drawings from the film *WEIGHING ... and WANTING* (Cameron, Christov-Bakargiev and Coetzee 1999:77).

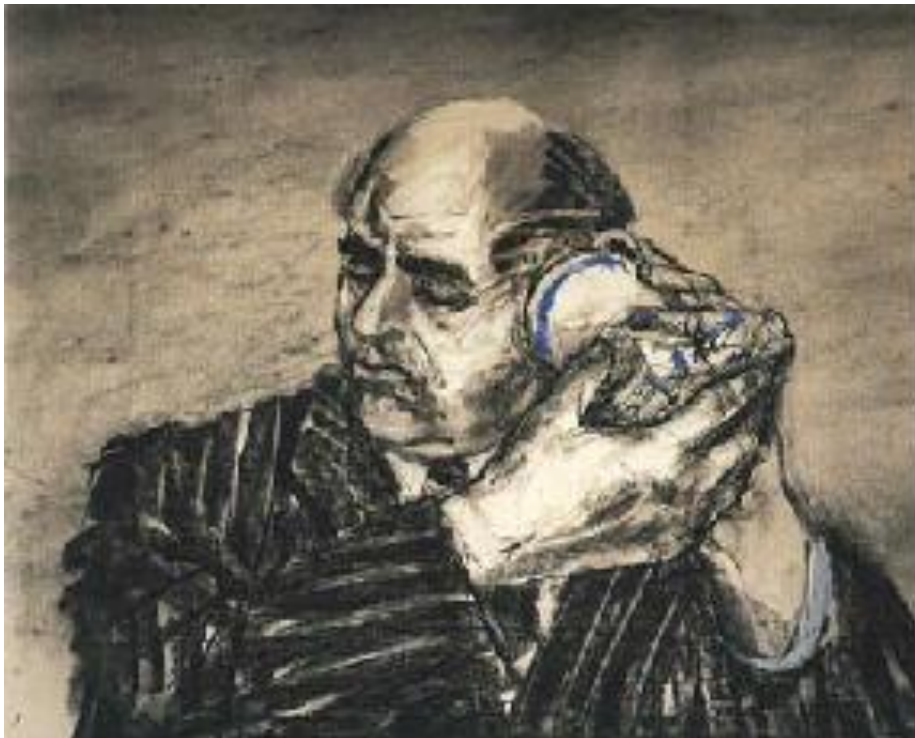


Figure 7.18 A close-up of the drawing from the installation exhibiting drawings from the film *WEIGHING ... and WANTING* (Cameron, Christov-Bakargiev and Coetzee 1999:77).



Figure 7.19 Drawing from the film *History of the Main Complaint* (Cameron, Christov-Bakargiev and Coetzee 1999:90).

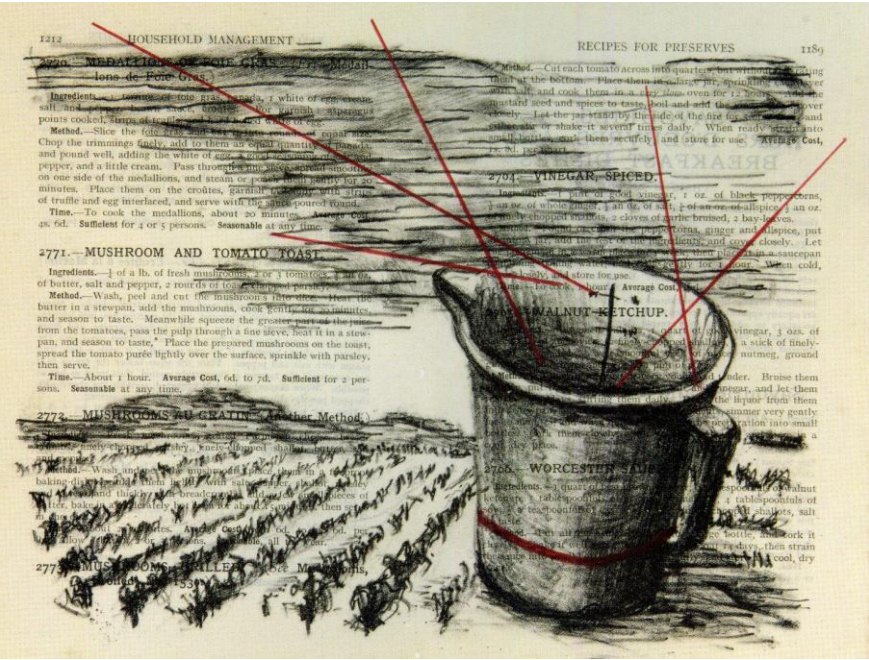


Figure 7.20 Mrs. Beaton's Household Management (Jug) William Kentridge, 2000 (Stewart 2006:86). Lithograph in black with hand-drawn red lines, on page spreads from Mrs. Beaton's Book of Household Management (1906) on Vélin d'Arches Blanc 250 gsm paper.

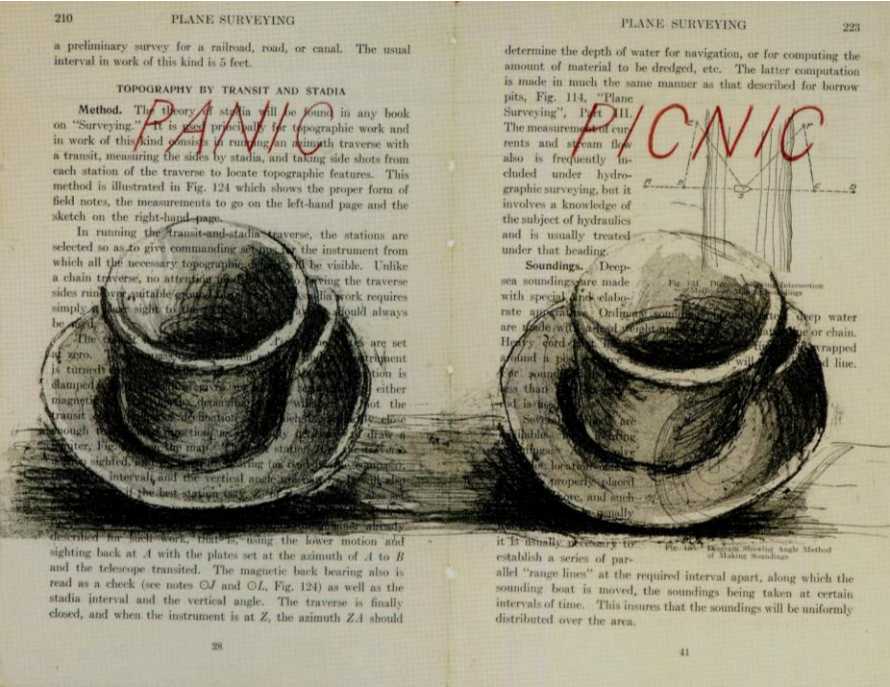


Figure 7.21 Drawing, from installation exhibit Stereoscope (Alemani 2006:65).

Laura Mulvey, a well-known feminist author, who introduced the concept of the “male gaze” into film studies, wrote in her book, *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*: “[T]he voyeuristic-scopophilic look is a crucial part of traditional filmic pleasure” (1975:45; cf. Burgin 1996). Roland Barthes writes about the “[A]uthor, reader, spectator or voyeur” of representation; all of these subjects “desire”, but of course it is the voyeur who does so obviously or “visibly” (Barthes 1977b:69).

Jean-Paul Sartre (1957), in his chapter *The Look*, from his famous work *Being and Nothingness*, describes the position of the voyeur as “*being-as-object for the Other*”:

[H]ere I am, bent over the key hole; suddenly I hear a footstep. I shudder as a wave of shame sweeps over me. Somebody has seen me. I straighten up. My eyes run over the deserted corridor. It was a false alarm. I breathe a sigh of relief.

Sartre however, states that even though he is petrified, he continues with his voyeurism,

I shall feel my heart beat fast, and I shall detect the slightest noise, the slightest creaking of the stairs. Far from disappearing with my first alarm, the Other is present everywhere, below me, above me, in neighbouring rooms, and I continue to feel profoundly my *being-for-others* (1957:369-370).

In chapter four (“*The Intertwining — The Chiasm*”) of his unfinished work, *The Visible and the Invisible*, Maurice Merleau-Ponty writes:

[S]ince the seer is caught up in what he sees; it is still himself he sees: there is a fundamental narcissism of all vision. And thus, for the same reason, the vision he exercises, he also undergoes from the things, such that, as many painters have said, I feel myself looked at by the things, my activity is equally passivity — which is the second and more profound sense of

narcissism: not to see in the outside, as others see it, the contour of a body one inhabits, but especially to be seen by the outside, to exist within it, to emigrate into it, to be seduced, captivated, alienated by the phantom, so that the seeing and the visible reciprocate one another and we no longer know which sees and which is seen (1968:139; cf. Burgin 1996).

The author of this study believes that this applies directly to William Kentridge and his “portraits” as Soho/Felix.

In *The Scoptophilic Instinct and Identification*, a paper written in 1935, Otto Fenichel states: “the eye plays a double part. It is not only actively sadistic but also passively receptive” (1953:375; cf. Burgin 1996). Included in this book is a citation by Géza Róheim on “looking-glass-magic”, in which the mirror presents an individual with his/her own ego in the form of an external body, which erases “the dividing–line between ego and non-ego” (Fenichel 1953:377; cf. Burgin 1996).

According to Michel Serres (Kroker and Cook 1988) and Michel Foucault (1970) the disembodied eye is a central metaphor for contemporary experiences: the eye is reversible, expressing in its symbolic effects the interiority of the retina of the viewer; it is the apparatus of surveillance and an eternal mirroring-effect of the possessive “I” of the self. It represents the modern experience which circles back upon itself in an endless mirroring-effect. In the symbology of the “eye”, a mirroring-effect is in progress in which the terms of the relation (signifier and signified) retract back and forth as image and counter-image in the endless curvature of a tautology (Kroker and Cook 1988). It is the eye / I in a society which privileges the position of voyeur. The eye motif emphasises the violence of

intrusion, the horror of the loss of privacy. This is apparent in *Mine*, where the viewer is exposed to the loss of privacy endured by the miners who sleep together in crowded bunks, and shower together as if in prison. Thus, self-reflexively, Kentridge burdens the viewer with the responsibility to see the awful conditions under which the miners work.

The “eye” and vision are central themes throughout Kentridge’s work — from images of a close-up of an eye filling the screen at the end of *Monument*, to the images in *History of the Main Complaint* where he, or the character of Soho/Felix, looks repeatedly at himself in his car’s rear-view mirror. There are also many scenes where Kentridge draws his character, Felix Teitlebaum, looking at himself in a mirror. In *Felix in Exile* and *History of the Main Complaint*, there are extreme close-ups of Kentridge’s eye — circled and highlighted. A more disturbing image of the eye is the close-up of Harry the hobo’s eye, at the end of *Monument*. Harry is pinioned onto a pedestal — a monument ironically donated by Soho Eckstein the “great benefactor” (whose philanthropy is bought and paid for by the labour of individuals — miners and workers). Harry’s eye seems to hold all the pain and suffering in the world along with a resignation to his position. Harry, Christ-like, is tied to stone, holding up a monumental rock, unable to move, with only the sound of his disturbing breathing as the credits roll.

Film theorist and academic, J. P. Telotte (cited in Kolb 1990) suggests that when fascination with doubling becomes the dominant force in someone's life, as it has

with Kentridge, s/he clearly runs the risk of becoming little more than a copy him/herself, potentially less human than the very images that have been fashioned in his/her likeness. This is fascinating because, for Kentridge, one must consider where reality begins and reality ends. It becomes difficult to disengage the characters from Kentridge and his life. The world is a place in which distinctions and differences between realities and images have been effaced. The real becomes not so much what can be produced as "that which is already reproduced" (Baudrillard 1983:122). In other words, it is an identification between an artificial construct (Kentridge's characters) and the real (Kentridge himself). There is also the appearance of being real — in *Johannesburg, 2nd Greatest City after Paris*, Felix Teitlebaum's dreams about his affair with Mrs. Eckstein do have a dream-like quality, and he does daydream about her while he is in the bath. Yet Kentridge also deals with the very real themes of social guilt and responsibility, the problems with capitalism and the evils of apartheid. He also includes a portrayal of his wife Anne in *WEIGHING ... and WANTING*⁴. The viewer questions what is real and what is not.

There is also the concept of voyeurism for the spectator as the audience watch Felix Teitlebaum having sex with Mrs. Eckstein (in *Johannesburg, 2nd Greatest City after Paris* and *Sobriety, Obesity & Growing Old*). Another voyeuristic aspect to his work is the view into the very depths of the mines and the horror that one sees there: decapitations, close ups of pained faces which also reflect the grotesquery

⁴ This researcher has had the opportunity to meet William Kentridge's wife, Anne Stanwix.

within, an overwhelming site / sight of blackness. The horror of the mines and the continuous recurrence of decapitated heads again appear to allude to Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1975) — whose main character, Kurtz, has looked into darkness — and to Frederic Nietzsche's comment:

[W]hoever fights monsters should see to it that in the process he does not become a monster. And when you look long into an abyss, the abyss also looks into you (Nietzsche 1979a:99; also quoted in *Chapter Five*).

One sees this in the images shown in *Johannesburg, 2nd Greatest City after Paris, Monument, Mine and Felix in Exile*. *Mine* combines a cross-section: in the mine, underground workers are working in a very dark and depressing setting. This is juxtaposed with Soho Eckstein in his luxurious and very comfortable bed above — sometimes sleeping and sometimes using his bed as an office desk. The images of the mine include images of the dormitories — dismal sleeping quarters and rows of men showering. These images include close-ups of severed heads lying on hard shelf-like beds — reminiscent of the beds in concentration camps and death camps in World War II. The hostels are divided into minuscule segments, or what William Gibson calls “coffins” (1993:124), and which contrast strongly with the large opulent homes of the upper classes. The miners’ existences — sleeping and living in huge concrete slabs and working in monoliths of stone — are alienated, with little or no personal contact. The heads look like skulls, not human, similar to the decapitated heads on the shelf in *Johannesburg, 2nd Greatest City after Paris*, and a recurring theme throughout his work. These are extremely depressing images, which also serve to dehumanise the individuals. As Kentridge himself has stated “everything has been ... de-humanised” (Oppelt 1999:6). The heads are

themselves a thing of beauty, and refer to an aesthetic tradition as well. This is a stark contradiction: one generally sees their beauty before realising their brutality, which tends to unnerve one. Like the death throes of “Nandi” in *Felix in Exile*, they are exquisite to look at, but one cannot separate the macabre qualities from the beauty. This makes them somehow more shocking than something that is simply ugly and grotesque and which prompts a straightforward response. Viewing these images is uneasy, challenging and confusing.

In *Mine*, individuals are merely tools to excavate gold or coal. They are a form of resource — dispensable and replaceable. One sees the dream-like imagery of a coffee plunger that makes its way down from and through Soho Eckstein’s bed, becoming a lift shaft and then becoming the drawing of a transatlantic slave ship — which was constructed in that way in order to fit as many slaves as possible. The images of slaves and the relevance to the miners are obvious. Mine workers are nothing but slave labour. Soho Eckstein’s bed / office desk becomes littered with ticker tape papers from an accounting machine — and includes mine workers as part of the waste and a part of the scene of a mine dump — industrial and environmental waste juxtaposed with a rhinoceros, which represents nature in direct opposition to environmental decay and devastation. Soho Eckstein clears his bed / office desk with one sweep of his arm, knocking everything off to allow him to play with his new pet project — a rhinoceros (see *Figure 7.22* and *Figure 7.23*).



Figure 7.22 Drawing from *Mine* (Cameron, Christov-Bakargiev and Coetzee 1999:115).



Figure 7.23 Drawing from *Mine* (Cameron, Christov-Bakargiev and Coetzee 1999:115).

Kentridge has also made a very short, and quite bizarre film titled *ECHO: scan slide bottle* (1998). In this film he uses a hand-held camera to trace his near-naked physical body very closely. At times, the images, disembodied fragments of sections of his arms, legs and stomach, are disturbing (see *Figure 7.24* and *Figure 7.25*). This is because if one is not aware of the overall theme of the film (the tracing of his physiological being), one is simply presented with images of portions of skin. These unattached images of patches of skin, which are very hirsute,

together with enlarged pores, beam out of the screen. At first the film *ECHO: scan slide bottle* seems completely contrasted with the films in his *Drawings for Projection* series. Firstly, with regard to the content of the films, the former is real while the latter is imagined. Secondly, the one is in documentary black and white style, in direct opposition to the charcoal hand-drawn animations of his series. Thirdly, and most importantly, the one deals with Kentridge's corporeality while the others deal with his unconscious psyche (or a part thereof). However, there are also blatant similarities. A closer look reveals that they are all traces of his being in terms of cinematic style. All are astonishingly intimate — a nakedness laid bare for the world to see (literally and metaphorically — his body and his mind). All are translucent in their intimate portrayals. They all evoke a sense of guilty voyeurism in the viewers. They also all shed some light on his identity: a slightly overweight, somewhat hirsute middle-aged man caught in a perpetual present constantly pre-occupied and tormented with psychological grapplings of individual and collective memories of guilt and responsibility.



Figure 7.24 A photograph still from *ECHO: scan slide bottle* (Benezra, Boris, Cooke, Sitas and Cameron 2001:126).



Figure 7.25 A photograph still from *ECHO: scan slide bottle* (Benezra, Boris, Cooke, Sitas and Cameron 2001:126).

7.2.2.2 Voyeurism and aesthetics

The concept of voyeurism is of course linked directly to that of aesthetics because the spectator wants to view images that are visually, or aesthetically pleasing. Orly Lubin (2004) asks the question with regard to the aesthetisation of the Holocaust: does the aesthetic form of film portraying these atrocities in any way compromise the horror of the Holocaust? Are there any other forms of aesthetics that are better suited to portraying the Holocaust, forms that induce more personal empathy, more insight into the atrocities? Film *per se* uses many different techniques, and many different fields come together to make up a film. All contribute to the production of a film: cinematographers, hairstylists, make-up artists, wardrobe artists, actors and directors. This process produces a very mediated form of art — many decisions come into play. Therefore the result is a more accessible form of representation. Film is a useful art form / medium to sustain memory. Fictional films specifically are distributed widely and are very successful at confronting an audience with such horrors in an identifiable and non-threatening form. With regard to Kentridge's beautiful cinematic drawings, even while acknowledging the power of the moving image — they do present an inherent danger. One can manipulate the story, and with it history; one can delete the political and social contexts; one can ignore the horrific scenes, erasing them from the story and history; and most importantly, the audience can become enthralled with the exquisite beauty of the pure aesthetics even while watching atrocities being perpetrated. For Orly Lubin (2004) there is the foremost danger of ignoring the ethical aspects of the real events as they are portrayed, aestheticised and dramatised. The audience judges the film by its

aesthetic appearance — beautiful camera shots, brilliant acting, stunning choices of locations, colours and scenery — rather than by judging the film's ethical meanings, consequences and repercussions. In his essay *The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility* (2002), Walter Benjamin focuses specifically on these questions. One pertinent question stands out: is film a worthwhile form of learning about the Holocaust? Does it trivialise or bastardise the memories of the survivors and victims? Is film merely about exploitation, or financial gain — “blood money”? Does the medium debase the lives of those survivors? How does a visual medium transcend the limitations of language, and thus communicate beyond language? In this age, where the screen or the visual replaces the importance of the verbal, do the very individuals onscreen make the survivors' testimony more real, more believable? Is the medium more effective at communicating descriptive scenes? Are survivors' testimonies — transmuted through different cinematic devices, such as the cinematographer's camera lens — “more-real-than-real” (Baudrillard cited in Smart 1993:122)? Or are they less effective or less believable because of the very use of these devices? How much more accessible are testimonies when given in a cinematic form?

With regard to voyeurism and the “spectacularization of death” (Lubin 2004:227), feature films attempt to avoid elements of fantasy⁵. There is a very real danger of promoting an ethical indifference that is a by-product of aestheticisation. Only

⁵ This question links with that of “pornography of violence” and again one is referred to Dean (2004).

Lubin brings our attention to the dangers of what is referred to as “Holocaust pornography” (2004:231). He explains that

[W]hile some films genuinely investigate the sexualization of power, others eroticize death and exploit, for purposes of arousal and profit, the sadomasochistic dynamics inherent in the relations between victim and perpetrator (Lubin 2004:231).

Only Lubin also draws attention to the distraction that beauty creates — a beautiful actor, a stunning location, an exquisite dress — thereby once again highlighting the conflict between ethics and aesthetics (2004). While Lubin is specifically referring to Holocaust feature films, one can easily apply his analysis to Kentridge’s hand-drawn animated films and the aesthetics thereof. Kentridge’s films contain many images that are simultaneously horrifying and beautiful, such as decapitated heads with lovely faces. David Trend believes that beautiful artistic images of violence “imbue transcendental meaning, even beauty” (2007:118). Roland Barthes was of the opinion that violent portrayals of human suffering serve to calm and placate one, because one views the images as having already occurred and therefore very much entrenched in the past. In addition the events portrayed happened to “them, not us” in a distant country (cited in Trend 2007:118). These images serve as evidence that such pain will not be repeated. David Levi Strauss, in his book titled *Between the Eyes: Essays on Photography and Politics*, writes: “[S]uch images do not compel us to action, but to acceptance. The action has already been taken, and we are not implicated” (2003:81)⁶.

⁶ For a detailed reading and exploration of “Holocaust pornography”; “pornography of violence”; “empathy fatigue”; and the desensitisation / numbness when viewing violent images, see Carolyn

David Bathrick also refers to Theodor W. Adorno's statement that to write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric (2004). He believes that Adorno was concerned with the perils inherent in the organised framework of active aesthetic experience. He believes "barbaric" refers to the "inevitable feelings of pleasure evoked by certain historically contingent aesthetic expressions — the notion, more specifically, that a transfiguration can occur and that some of the horror of the event might thereby be ameliorated" (Bathrick 2004:294). There is a danger in this (one is referred back to the mention of Kentridge's beautiful drawings of hideous topics). In his rearticulating of Adorno's statement, Bathrick thinks that it is more important to hold close the road to an "aesthetics of postmemory" (Hirsch 1997),

as a reconstructing, even a working through, of the image as fetish and as iconic staple of the collective pictorial archive so necessary for the retrieval of Holocaust memory in the first place (Bathrick 2004:294).

However, in the opinion of this study's author, viewing these images or creating these artistic visions can also be seen or experienced as cathartic. At the beginning of psychoanalysis, Sigmund Freud introduced the term "abreaction" (Rycroft 1972; cf. Freud 1899a and 1899b; 1991). This refers to the expressing / identifying / discharging of emotion that is attached to repressed emotion relating to a specific experience. Charles Rycroft wrote that in the early days of psychoanalysis, abreaction or catharsis as it is sometimes referred to, was believed to be highly therapeutic irrespective of whether or not the individual understood or could trace the importance of the repressed emotion / experience

Dean (2004). William Kentridge has the following comment on the subject: "desensitisation becomes another form of disremembering" (cited in Christov-Bakargiev 1998:49).

(1972). Basically if one watched a film in which the character's parents died, and one had many repressed emotions relating to the death of one's own parents, then one would emote during this episode. This would be because it would unleash those very repressed emotions that one had repressed.

With regard to the dream-like quality of life, Victor Burgin writes the following: Eddie Constantine, an actor portraying a character who acts in B-grade movies, in the short film *La Paresse*, directed by Jean-Luc Godard, refuses an offer of sex from a go-getting starlet. He turns down her offer because he is loath to get dressed all over again (1996). Alain Bergala, a film theorist, writes the following in response to this scene:

Eddie Constantine marvellously embodies that very special state given by an immense lassitude, an apparent inertia which is in fact a state of great porosity to the strangeness of the world, a mixture of torpor, of loss of reality and a somewhat hallucinatory vivacity of sensations ... Godard speaks to us of this very special way of being in the world (cited Burgin 1996:171).

So too are Kentridge's portrayals of "hallucinatory reality" in his films.

Dan Cameron, on writing about Kentridge, also asks whether or not "any visual artist working today has the necessary tools to produce representations of vast complex cultural and/or political issues" (1999:43). He answers his own question, by stating that Kentridge, in his *Drawings for Projection* series,

provides unexpected insight into how a single person [Soho/Felix] can become the repository of an entire culture's ideas and history, and how this can be transmitted in turn through the audience's instinctual responses to a character's behaviour, bypassing temporarily the ideological basis for the beliefs underlying that behaviour (1999:46).

This chapter now focuses on photography, memory and the concepts of absence and presence and the representation of traumata.

7.2.2.3 Photography and representation

In *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (1981), Roland Barthes' last work, he focuses on the legend of Orpheus. According to Greek mythology, Orpheus was a musician with the ability to enchant plants and animals with his music. He married a nymph, Eurydice. Unfortunately she soon died after having been bitten by a poisonous snake. Devastated by her death, Orpheus followed Eurydice to the underworld. Using his music he enchanted the underworld deities (Persephone) into releasing her. There was one condition. Orpheus had to escort Eurydice to the upper world without casting his gaze upon her. He did look upon her though, with dire consequences — she disappeared completely:

... yearning to see her with his own eyes,
through love he turned,
and with his gaze she slipped away and down.
He stretched out his arms,
struggling to embrace and be embraced,
but unlucky and unhappy he grasped nothing ...

(Ov. Meta. Bk:11 Ln. 61-66; tr. Morford & Lenardon 1977).

For Barthes, a photograph becomes the gaze of Orpheus guaranteeing the "absence — as presence" in what he calls the "*noeme*", that is, the certainty that "*that-has-been*" (1981:96). The photograph is pure representation, and contains reality and the past. In other words, if Orpheus had done what he was told to do — that is, not look at his wife (which represents absence) — Eurydice would have continued to exist (presence). Yet the photograph captures the subject (or body; or

borrowing from Jean-Paul Sartre, the fact of “*being-in-itself*” (Sartre 1957; cf. Flew 1979:313) as an object (Wiseman 1989; cf. Moriarty 1991). The photograph is a testament of lost time and lost memories. You know that the person existed because s/he is in the photograph. For Barthes, in photography, the presence of the thing (at a certain past moment) is never metaphoric. Furthermore, in a “photograph ... the past is as certain as the present, what we see on paper is as certain as what we touch” (Kroker and Cook 1988:157). In his film *Sobriety, Obesity & Growing Old*, Kentridge challenges this idea. There is a scene where Soho Eckstein is at his desk at work. He looks mournfully at the framed photograph of his wife. Instead of seeing what he expected to see, that is, a fixed image of his wife, he is instead shown a mini-film of his wife cavorting with Felix Teitlebaum.

In his book, Roland Barthes (1981) also links photography, history and the mother figure. He focuses on the mother figure in relation to the question of history, for his Mother (*sic*) represents his origins. A photograph represents the trace of an origin and thus, a personal identity, the proof of having existed and therefore the right to exist. History is that time when his mother was living, before him (Bruno 1987). And history implies the possibility of the dream of unity (Wiseman 1989). Photographs document existence in history, which are then transformed into memories of lives lived and lost. According to Michel Foucault, this documentation is imperative for perceiving temporality in terms of past and future (cited in Poster

1984). The photograph bears witness to the reality of its object, where “reality” is construed as presence (Wiseman 1989:143-147).

Photography superimposes reality and the past, the signifier and the referent (signified) (Moriarty 1991). Photography, according to Giuliana Bruno (1987), is designated the immense task of reasserting the referent, of re-appropriating the real and historical continuity. Can one not say that in Kentridge’s realistic drawings the historical referent is replaced by the drawing referent? Are Kentridge’s drawings not the same as photographs? The presence of Kentridge in a drawing “makes” him real. The presence of the thing certainly is not metaphoric, but real — the miners, the slave ships, the capitalists, are they not real? Kentridge’s series have captured a world of memories — his and others. Kentridge’s drawings are a world of simulations, a world in which distinctions and differences between realities and referents have been effaced. The real becomes not so much as what can be produced as “that which is already reproduced” (Jean Baudrillard cited in Smart 1993:122). Kentridge has eliminated the comparable distinction between imitation and reality. His drawings are not mere illusions of realities, but what Baudrillard calls “hyper-real” (cited in Smart 1993:122). The unreal has become real. Again, his characters are “more-real-than-real” (Baudrillard cited in Kellner 1989:68).

Another issue raised by Barthes’ concept of the *noeme* (“*that-has-been*”) of the photograph is the question of immortality. Immortality is unattainable — except in a photograph where the subject continues to “exist” — lost time is reclaimed and lost

memories are re-remembered. They are immortal in that they have been frozen in time. And so too are Kentridge's drawings — frozen in time, documenting history.

David Bathrick, with regard to both the absence and presence of an image, focuses specifically on “the epochal non-enunciation of the *Muselmann*” (2004:290). Survivors such as Jean Améry, Bruno Bettelheim, Primo Levi and Ruth Kluger (amongst others) refer to this spectre of a person. The *Muselmann* gets his/her name from the adapted German word for “Muslim” (association / reason unknown), and was the result of systematic, intentional torture and abuse by the SS through starving and working inmates to their proximal death, and through this very process turning them into submissive, compliant, wandering, spectral half dead beings (Bathrick 2004:291). Jean Améry described them thus: “[H]e was a staggering corpse, a bundle of physical functions in its last convulsions” (1980:9; cf. Bathrick 2004). This *Muselmann* has stubbornly remained on the periphery of descriptions and testimonies of the Holocaust. However Giorgio Agamben writes that it is “a striking fact that although all witnesses speak of him as a central experience, the *Muselmann* is barely named in the historical studies on the destruction of European Jews” (1999:52; cf. Bathrick 2004).

Through his own studies, Agamben has reported an “absence of visual representations” of this functional corpse. He refers to cinematic footage taken by the Allies when they liberated Bergen-Belson, describing what he sees as “living

people, a group of prisoners ... wandering on foot like ghosts” and has reported that this remains the sole evidence or visual representation of these spectres (1999:51).

For the author of this doctoral study, it begs the question why: why this absence of imagery of the *Muselmann*? Furthermore, does this absence suggest that there remains the question of how to portray these individuals and ultimately whether or not one should attempt to portray them? A discussion on this non-portrayal of the *Muselmann* follows below in an attempt to address these questions and engage with them, albeit briefly. This discussion is then related to Kentridge’s works. The *Muselmann* phenomenon is one that is looked at almost in disgust, and Primo Levi allocates their representation to the “gray zone” (1989:36-69). Bruno Bettelheim and other victims rather shockingly express their ambiguous emotions of shame, disappointment, anguish and loathing towards the *Muselmann* (1960). Bettelheim believes that these mixed emotions towards these “ghosts” are mere projection on the part of the survivors — their own torment and fury / rage at their existence, a reminder of “their own imminent systematic transformation into a nonhuman being” (Bettelheim 1960:156; cf. Bathrick 2004). Primo Levi extrapolates on this by stating that there was even an “institutionalized complicity with the SS among prisoners” who focused on their own survival, even going so far as to knock these ghosts down — for what was the purpose of yet another *Muselmann* dragging him/herself to work — they were an unnecessary burden (1996:88). Of the *Muselmann*, Levi further writes that all those “who finish in the gas chambers have

the same story, or more exactly, have no story; they followed the slope down to the bottom, like streams that run into the seas” (1996:90; cf. Bathrick 2004:293).

This is similar to those streams of unidentified workers found in Kentridge’s *Johannesburg, 2nd Greatest City after Paris*. They have a “ghostly”, “nonhuman” air about them (see *Figure 7.24* and *Figure 7.25*). The proletariat represented in his film are not subjects of pity, not deserving of empathy, but rather derision and disgust / revulsion (from Soho Eckstein’s point of view). Thus Soho Eckstein throws food scraps at them, rather than feeling sorry for them and giving them food parcels, or increasing their pay so they can afford to buy more food (see *Figure 7.26*: Eckstein and his overflowing table of food from which he hurls the food). Are they an embarrassment perhaps, because the assumption is that they are not workers, but rather slaves, in Soho Eckstein’s employment? Their poverty is a direct result of their working conditions and below subsistence earnings — for which Soho Eckstein is undoubtedly responsible. His actions completely dehumanise them. His throwing food leftovers at them is done with real anger and scorn, no sympathy whatsoever is evident. If he truly empathised with them he would no longer view them as his slaves to be exploited, but as individuals who work for him, deserving of better pay and better working conditions.



Figure 7.26 Drawing from *Johannesburg, 2nd Greatest City after Paris* (Godby 1992:unpaginated).



Figure 7.27 Drawing from *Johannesburg, 2nd Greatest City after Paris* (Godby 1992:unpaginated).



Figure 7.28 Drawing from *Johannesburg, 2nd Greatest City after Paris* (Cameron, Christov-Bakargiev and Coetzee 1999:52).

Is Kentridge's work a "tortured scream" (to paraphrase Adorno)? William Kentridge's films embody / offer what Robert Kolker (2002) calls a dialectical mimetic expression; an expression of atrocities that disturbs viewers, forcing one to scrutinise one's own values and beliefs rather than pandering to, or satisfying them (see *Figure 7.29* and *Figure 7.30*).

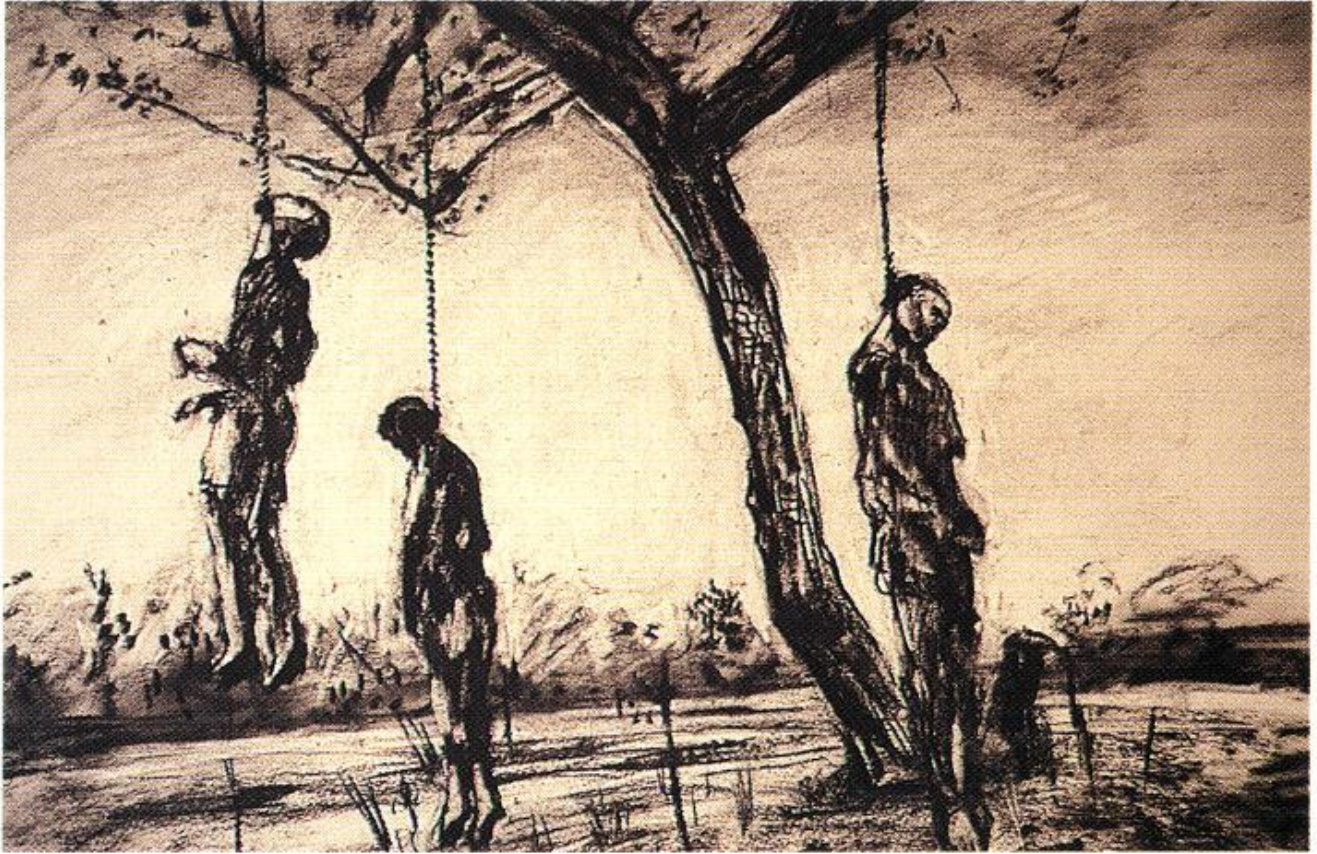


Figure 7.29 Drawing used in the animation for the play *Faustus in Africa!* (Cameron, Christov-Bakargiev and Coetzee 1999:21).

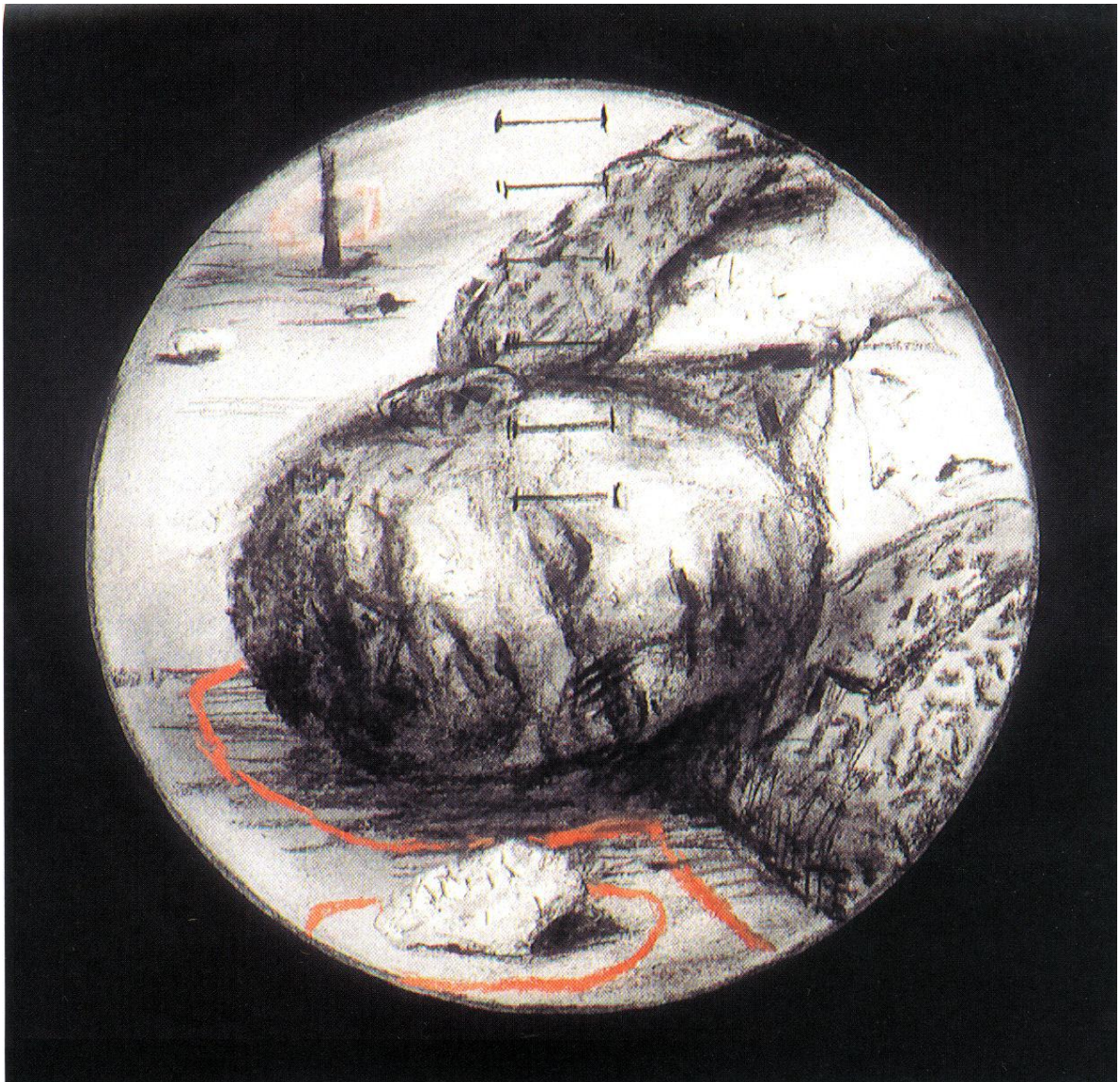


Figure 7.30 Drawing from *Felix in Exile* (Christov-Bakargiev 1998:95).

7.3 Conclusion

These mediums show the importance of such representations, or re-representations, in the role of remembering atrocities, and the significance of art in reaching audiences normally untouched by such occurrences. Having discussed

memory, representation and aesthetics, this study now turns its attention to

Chapter Eight: Memory, History, Identity, Time and Space.

CHAPTER SEVEN: QUESTIONS OF MEMORY, REPRESENTATION AND AESTHETICS

This chapter focuses on different artistic mediums and their importance in representing human suffering and tragedy. It concentrates on how artists and filmmakers represent what is thought to be “the un-representable”. From literary works to films and then photography, the chapter attempts to show the significance of these mediums in their role in perpetuating memories and lived experiences. Artistic portrayals of violence unleashed upon the collective and the individual serve to guard against the repetition and condoning of such atrocities. The inclusion of examples of representations, or re-representations, of memory / memories; traumas; and memorialisation might seem an unnecessary excursion. However, as with all qualitative research comparative analyses are of the utmost importance (Christians and Carey 1981). There are several reasons for this. Firstly the comparisons between artistic representations provide further credibility to the researcher’s interpretations and analysis of Kentridge’s films. Secondly, the reference to these comparative examples assists with the clarification of certain features. Thirdly, by making conceptual comparisons, it supports definitions and exacts concepts used throughout this study to interpret Kentridge’s films. In addition to that, this chapter serves to strengthen and contextualise the link between Kentridge’s art and the Holocaust (artistic representations). Therefore, at the centre of this chapter is memory and its often unique and challenging depictions. With regard to memory, Susan Sontag writes rather poignantly in her book *Regarding the Pain of Others*: “[R]emembering is an ethical act, has ethical

value in and of itself. Memory is, achingly, the only relation we can have with the dead” (2003:174).

7.1 Representation

Theodor W. Adorno famously wrote: “[T]o write a poem after Auschwitz is barbaric” (cited in Howe 2003:288; cf. Adorno 1951 / 1991). It is often misquoted but continues to be debated amongst academics and the like (Hirsch and Kacandes 2004; Howe 2003; LaCapra 2003; cf. Adorno 1981:17-34; Adorno 1991:37-54). Adorno later answered this question himself explaining that “consolation necessarily finds its only outlet in art” (cited in Gubar 2004:167; cf. Adorno 1981:17-34; Adorno 1991:37-54). Yet, the question of whether or not art can represent hideous atrocities perpetrated against humankind is a contested question; as is how artists choose to portray these atrocities (Dean 2004; Gubar 2004; Hirsch and Kacandes 2004; LaCapra 2003).

Jennifer Arlene Stone is a psychoanalyst with a private practice in New York who has written extensively on William Kentridge’s work. She extrapolates on Adorno’s last statement: “art’s symbolic strivings against the vacuum, the collapse of symbolization after Auschwitz, are the sole guarantee against culture’s dementia” (2003:63). In this manner, Kentridge believes that art is a cry, ““Alas!” He answers Adorno’s quandary “Alas, there is the lyric!”” (Stone 2003:67; cf. Christov-Bakargiev 1998). Furthermore, Kentridge is quoted in Stone: “[T]here is still poetry after Apartheid” (2003:67). From his statement the author of this thesis has come

to the conclusion that Kentridge is of the opinion that art has its place in perpetuating memory and that carrying on with life after such a tragedy is important. His previous statement is poignant because he has obviously debated and provocatively thought about whether or not one should, or can carry on as before. It is indeed a “quandary” — Kentridge seems to imply that that in itself has poetry about it. The ambiguity is of course that even after the Holocaust, and other atrocities such as the Palestinian or apartheid atrocities, the living do indeed carry on living and creating art. The ability to continue life as before is also something that Kentridge explores in *History of the Main Complaint*. It is mentioned and commented on in *Chapter Five*, but to reiterate briefly: Soho/Felix encounters atrocities and memories of atrocities as he drives along a lonely, empty road¹. Soho/Felix then becomes very ill, lapsing into a “coma” of sorts, where his unconscious attempts to deal with his own hand in such atrocities / actions / complicity. Is it remorse he shows afterwards? Perhaps so, but still, it is him back at his desk, and it is “business as usual”. So whether or not Kentridge identifies with the protagonist or the victim, he seems to admit reluctantly that the living continues to do just that: carry on living. Kentridge has added to Theodor W. Adorno’s quote by stating that he is concerned with “time’s dulling of memory and intense passion” (cited in Christov-Bakargiev 1999:13). Jennifer Arlene Stone also writes, rather relevantly, that William Kentridge’s work is imbued “with *saudade*,” a Portuguese “yearning” indicative of achieved mourning. ... “*Fado*” intones an

¹ One of the images that Kentridge includes is of a man being beaten by two other men. This is something that he actually witnessed as a child while riding in a car with his grandfather, he clearly remembers this: “shocking image of violence”; incorporating the image into his film (Kentridge cited in Christov-Bakargiev 1998:29); cf. *Chapter Two*.

acceptance of one's "fate" against the lugubrious verdict of German pessimism after Adorno ..." (2003:87). Author Okwui Enwezor has described Kentridge's works as "post-Holocaust" because, he argues, Kentridge's *oeuvre* deals with the "aftermath of a horrific period of history" (cited in Benezra, Boris, Cooke, Sitas and Cameron 2001:33).

Also referring to Theodor W. Adorno's famous statement, Susan Gubar adds that "the idea of writing poetry of such barbarism is repulsive at worst and inane at best" (2004:170). She suggests that poetry, (and read here, by extension all art) has a place in Holocaust remembrance because it is able to articulate a contradiction. It highlights the difficulty that the representation of such horrors is unattainable, yet it also highlights the importance of trying to do so. Perhaps in a mediated form of poetry / art the horrific might be more believable or transmittable than more realistic portrayals? This can be said of Kentridge's works: his traumatic past growing up in a brutal regime of apartheid and his postmemories are represented as fantastical and surreal in his films, yet his work is also authentic, convincing and, yes, even very realistic.

"The past can be seized only as an image," writes Walter Benjamin "and every image of the past that is not recognized by the present as of its own concerns threatens to disappear irretrievably" (1963:255). By dismissing narrative order, by pouncing on specific images of the past, poets (read here artists as well) not only highlight discontinuities, but they engage in the psychological, the intellectual, the

social, the political, ethical and aesthetic elements without attempting to recreate the horrors in their totalities. They basically do not attempt to answer or provide a solution for past iniquities but offer insight where there might be none. They (artists / authors) attempt to show the impossibility of a coherent understandable story / drawing, they instead offer “spurts of vision, baffling but nevertheless powerful pictures of fragmentary scenes unassimilated into an explanatory plot” (Gubar 2004:166). Trauma itself is not experienced as a narrative — but like flashbacks artists provide images that at once testify to its existence and to the fact that an event can defy comprehensibility and understanding. Artist’s images are like those in the unconscious — fragmentary and elusive, yet they exist. Artists’ depiction of trauma is often “an involuntary return to intense feelings about an incomprehensible, incommunicable moment” but in this format the images of the trauma can be revisited in relative safety, trying to deal with it and its consequences without being “silenced by it” (Gubar 2004:166). As Geoffrey Hartman suggests, there is a form of “memory envy”, “whereby those who have not gone through traumatic experiences adopt these experiences, or identify with them” (2004:230; cf. Hartman 1996). This of course is similar to Hirsch’s concept of “postmemory” (1997) cited and discussed in *Chapter Five*.

At the beginning of this chapter, the Adorno conundrum was strongly stated, this section returns to that enquiry. Bella Brodzki claims that the trauma of the Holocaust has become an existential and dominant question / concept of modern existence. How does one describe the indescribable; how does one portray the

unportrayable? (2004:133). By extension, Darfur and apartheid are just two recent (2008) examples where the existential question applies. Imre Kertész, a Holocaust survivor, suggests that were the Holocaust to find a reliable language to describe the indescribable, “wouldn’t this language have to be so terrifying, so lugubrious, that it would destroy those who speak it?” (2002:39; cf. Stark 2004:199). This also refers back to the Frederic Nietzsche quote in *Chapter Five* that comments on “looking into the abyss” (1979a:99). Is Kentridge being destroyed by his portrayals of wicked deeds, or is it a form of catharsis for him? Kentridge’s works are also what Paul Virilio expressly termed “the teletopological puzzle”, that is, “all of these together (photography, cinema, film, television) — ‘together’ not as a totality but as a constantly shifting constellation of fragments” (cited in Burgin 1996:22). The term is useful to apply to Kentridge’s use of a wide array of disparate artistic mediums that he uses in his works. Poet and art critic Rainer Maria Rilke put it thus in his observation on Honoré Balzac’s works: “this kind of drawing is not of contours, but of oscillating transitions” (cited in Stone 2003:73): this is a pertinent description to apply to Kentridge’s films.

However, although this study has argued that Kentridge’s works portray the indescribable authentically and realistically, (using surreal imagery at times)² it can

² This is possibly more apt when discussing Kentridge’s films as his works are both “dreadful” (hideous images) and “consoling” (references to remorse and social responsibility). His works are especially “hallucinatory”, considering the surreal aspects / images in them. To quote Alfred Jarry, who was writing about his play *Ubu Roi*: “[R]ecounting understandable things merely burdens the spirit and falsifies memory, whereas the absurd invigorates the spirit and engages memory” (cited in Cooke 2001:56). Kentridge’s films, according to Ari Sitas, are “playfully using all the post-dadaist and surrealist techniques to disturb and animate his imagery” (2001:63).

still be argued that his various mediums of doing so are in fact too fantastical to be credible. Pre-empting this argument, this chapter looks at the different mediums that Kentridge makes use of to portray the “lugubrious” (Kertész 2002:39; see *Figure 7.1*). The chapter cites previous studies and examples that have been artistically created in a similar vein, thereby giving further credibility (through comparability) to the authenticity of Kentridge’s *oeuvre* and the themes that it portrays. Firstly, the chapter looks at writing / drawing artists; secondly, the medium of film, and thirdly, photography. After all, Kentridge’s works are truly a “teletopological puzzle”, as Paul Virilio would put it (cited in Burgin 1996:2).



Figure 7.1 Drawing from *Mine* (Godby 1992:unpaginated).

7.2 Re-representations

7.2.1 Artists / authors

The storytelling or novelistic approach to the historical past, which acknowledges our continuing distance from it, becomes less about representation and more about “memory, mourning, and reconstruction in different interpretive communities” (DeKoven Ezrahi 2004:61). Furthermore,

[I]n different interpretive communities, the search for a unique language adequate to unprecedented experience has yielded to a search for recovery of artistic conventions as a way to restore social order in the wake of cataclysm and to reclaim a purchase on the future that is continuous with the pre-traumatic past (DeKoven Ezrahi 2004:61).

Most importantly, in Israel the idea of authenticity in representing the Holocaust has been replaced by what DeKoven Ezrahi defines as “empathetic projection” (2004:62). Kentridge’s films do just that: through his empathy and identification, Kentridge portrays the dreadfulness of apartheid in a unique cinematic and artistic way.

Some academics / authors / theorists are critical of the Holocaust purists. Purists look back to the crematoria, and insist that authenticity, authority and representation are to be protected. For them Auschwitz becomes “the sole determinant and ultimate extinguisher of meaning” (DeKoven Ezrahi 2004:64). They see the past — suspended / fixed temporarily and spatially — which has resulted in “a culture of the unsayable, the elusive, the inscrutable, and the immutable” (DeKoven Ezrahi 2004:64). Is this not defeatist in a sense, since who is to decide what is an authentic portrayal?

This section focuses on the following three authors / artists: art spiegelman (*sic*)³, Pascal Croci and Joe Kubert. Like Kentridge they too have made use of animation to portray tragedies.

7.2.1.1 art spiegelman (*sic*)

There are varied ways of witnessing trauma, with one such perspective being ‘generational’. Since the early 1970s, much research has dwelt on the effects of “what may be unbound, unintegrated, unshared massive traumatization” (Brodzki 2004:132). How relevant is language to communicate such a legacy? And by extension, how relevant is art to communicate such a heritage? Efraim Sicher (2004), in his essay *Postmemory, Backshadowing, Separation: Teaching Second-generation Holocaust Fiction*, asks the question of whether or not the children of survivors of the Holocaust have the right to their and their parents’ stories: as “second-generation witnesses” (Bauman 1998; Berger 1998; Sicher 2004). Are they claiming a martyrdom not their own? Froma I. Zeitlin believes that such writers (read “artists” here) “represent the past through modes of enactment — even reanimation — through which the self, the ‘ego’, the ‘one who was not there’, now takes on a leading role as a active presence” (Zeitlin 1998:6; cf. Sicher 2004; Zeitlin 2001). Efraim Sicher believes that “absent memory” is still made of angst and other post-traumatic stress-related symptoms (see *Chapter Six*). As of now, there are no known statistics on whether or not second generation individuals

³ art spiegelman (*sic*) specifically spells his name with lower case letters, although it is not known why, out of respect for his choice, this study does so too.

share a common pathology, and it is almost impossible to gauge just how much post-traumatic stress they have inherited from their parents / siblings. “Generational transference” of traumatic memory is more than likely to be affected by both national memory and the local environs (Bar-On 1995; Fox 1999; Hass 1996; Sicher 2004). Second generation children, as well as their social / age groups (not of biological relations to victims / survivors), are expected, and even forced, “to imagine their way from a common post-Holocaust existence into a past of which they have no personal memory” (Sicher 2004:263; cf. Grossman 1989 / 2002).

These generations have “inherited ghosts in the family cupboard” (Rosembaum 1999a:59-60; cf. Sicher 2004), and history has “maimed them before birth” (Rosembaum 1999b; Sicher 2004:263). Melvin J. Bukiet, a writer and a child of survivors, has commented that “[F]or anyone who wasn’t there, on either side of the barbed wire, Jew or German, thinking about the Holocaust is really an act of the imagination. All we know is how little we know” (2002:16).

art spiegelman (*sic*) wrote and drew a two-volume book: *Maus: My Father Bleeds History Volume I* (1986), and *A Survivor’s Tale Volume II* (1991), which details the legacy of the survivors’ son: himself, as “Artie” (the protagonist and cartoon / graphic son; see *Figures 7.2 — 7.7*). This is a radical form of communication — an attempt to share his father’s oral testimony about his survival of the Holocaust with

the rest of the world — a graphic novel of trauma as an uncomprehendable devastation. *Maus* contains episodes and dialogue that

expose, examine, and problematize from every conceivable perspective, through every technical and intellectual resource available to spiegelman, especially the instrument of mordant irony, the complex phenomenon of familial transmission and inheritance (Brodzki 2004:132; cf. spiegelman 1986 / 1991).

art spiegelman's *Maus* is about how the second generation reworks the images of a wrecked past. It is less about his parents' original trauma and more about the son's reworking of that trauma. James E. Young suggests that spiegelman's *Maus* is a work of "received history — a narrative hybrid that interweaves both events of the Holocaust and the ways that they are passed down to us" (Young 2000:15; cf. Young 2004). spiegelman's reworking is an "historicizing process" — the focus is not on the events themselves but rather on how one recovers these events, which results in one being aware of what s/he does / does not understand (Bathrick 2004:297). *Maus* is a hybrid, a montage of double narration, sub-plots and contradictions (spiegelman 1986 / 1991). Andreas Huyssen posits that *Maus* is "an estrangement effect in the service of 'mimetic approximation'". For example, the animal drawings / depictions suggest a possible political allegorisation: Germans as cats, Jews as mice, and Poles as pigs (Huyssen 2000:28-44; cf. Huyssen 2003). Through this inversion of reality and a reworking / re-imagining of such events / types, the imagery becomes expatriated from its origins; "it is not an authentic replication of the real" (Bathrick 2004:298). By this one assumes Bathrick is stating that they are not identical reproductions, but representations. Artists like spiegelman and Claude Lanzmann (who made the film *Shoah*) are

committed to finding new and innovative ways of visualising the Holocaust; this is based on the belief that in order to remember one needs to see and work through the past. They serve as examples that there is no one “true and all-encompassing visualization” of the past (Bathrick 2004:298). The same can be said of Kentridge’s films. His *Drawings for Projection* series provide his audience with a new and unique way of viewing apartheid.

Memorial books, or *yizkor*, are a form of survivor testimony — small volumes of multi-authored accounts in the form of notes, poems, maps, drawings, photographs. They are all an attempt not only to encapsulate the life of a community before the Holocaust, but also an attempt at preserving first-hand accounts of the horrors of the war. These memorial books have given rise to post-memorial (read here “postmemory”; cf. Hirsch 1997) books — texts that are endeavours between the survivor and others — often second generation family members. Examples are Spiegelman’s *Maus* (1986 / 1991) and Alina Bacall-Zwirn and Jared Stark’s *No Common Place* (1999). Both capture the memory of others, and the relationships that evolve between the teller and the hearer of these experiences. Jared Stark believes that these post-memorial books are an insistence “that witnessing can and should be a collective endeavour, an endeavour that does not simply enshrine the past but that recognizes its abiding presence” (2004:202).

Yet Stephen Tabachnick identifies *Maus* not as a memoir, but as an “autobiographical graphic novel” (1993:154-162). He arrives at this conclusion by asserting that Spiegelman recounts the documentary-biography of his father, Vladek Spiegelman, as a journey of discovery from his biological roots to his psychological and ethnic foundations. This journey begins with historical knowledge / facts but ends up with a knowledge that is no longer unconscious or covert, but “active and personal” (Tabachnick 1993:154).

Maus is the voicing of a survivor’s muteness which stresses the importance of the “communicability of repressed memory and the efficacy of artistic ventriloquism” (Morahg 1999:457-479; Sicher 2004:267). In *Maus*, Spiegelman transposes the categories of victim and survivor. Such a “transposition enacts past trauma as if it were present, bringing order to the chaos of history as well as internalizing the identities of both perpetrators and victims” (Kestenberg 1982:148-149; Sicher 2004:267).

This internalisation of course, runs the risk of being relegated to moral relativism, but it could also be seen as the unlocking and introduction of Primo Levi’s “gray zone” (*sic*) of the Holocaust “where there are no clear-cut ethical choices” (Levi 1998:36; cf. Levi 1996 and 1998; Sicher 2004:268).

This study suggests the following observations: in his comic books Spiegelman portrays his own insecurities — at once guilty and suffering from angst. How does

he compete with an immortalised and ever-enduring brother he never knew? Would “I” have endured; what if “I” had not survived; and how might “I” have defied death; how do “I” contend with such martyrdom (cf. Brodzki 2004)? Discussing his guilt with his wife, spiegelman makes a statement, which the author of this study believes, reveals his real obsession with his inheritance, despite his denial: “Don’t get me wrong. I wasn’t obsessed with this stuff ... It’s just that sometimes I’d fantasize Zyklon B coming out of our shower instead of water” (spiegelman 1991:16; see *Figure 7.6*).

It is intriguing to note just how similar and dissimilar spiegelman and Kentridge’s works are. That they are both animated is obvious; whether you want to term the one cartoon-like and the other animated, whether the one is in hand-drawn pencil and the other hand-drawn charcoal, the one a graphic novel(s) the other animated film(s), are all really technical details of a dis / similar kind. They are however expressions of guilt and (post)memories — their own and others. That they have chosen to draw “their experiences” shows an intimacy and a desire to exorcise or own their own guilt and compliance in these tales. Whether you want to academicitise and psychologise and name their guilt as survivor guilt, guilt by association, generational guilt, upper middle-class guilt or even relative guilt, their guilt is apparent. That spiegelman says that he was not obsessed with his parents’ stories is in the opinion of the author of this dissertation, a form of denial, a way of processing his guilt. Extrapolating from this, the same can be said of Kentridge’s films, they too are a form of processing his guilt.

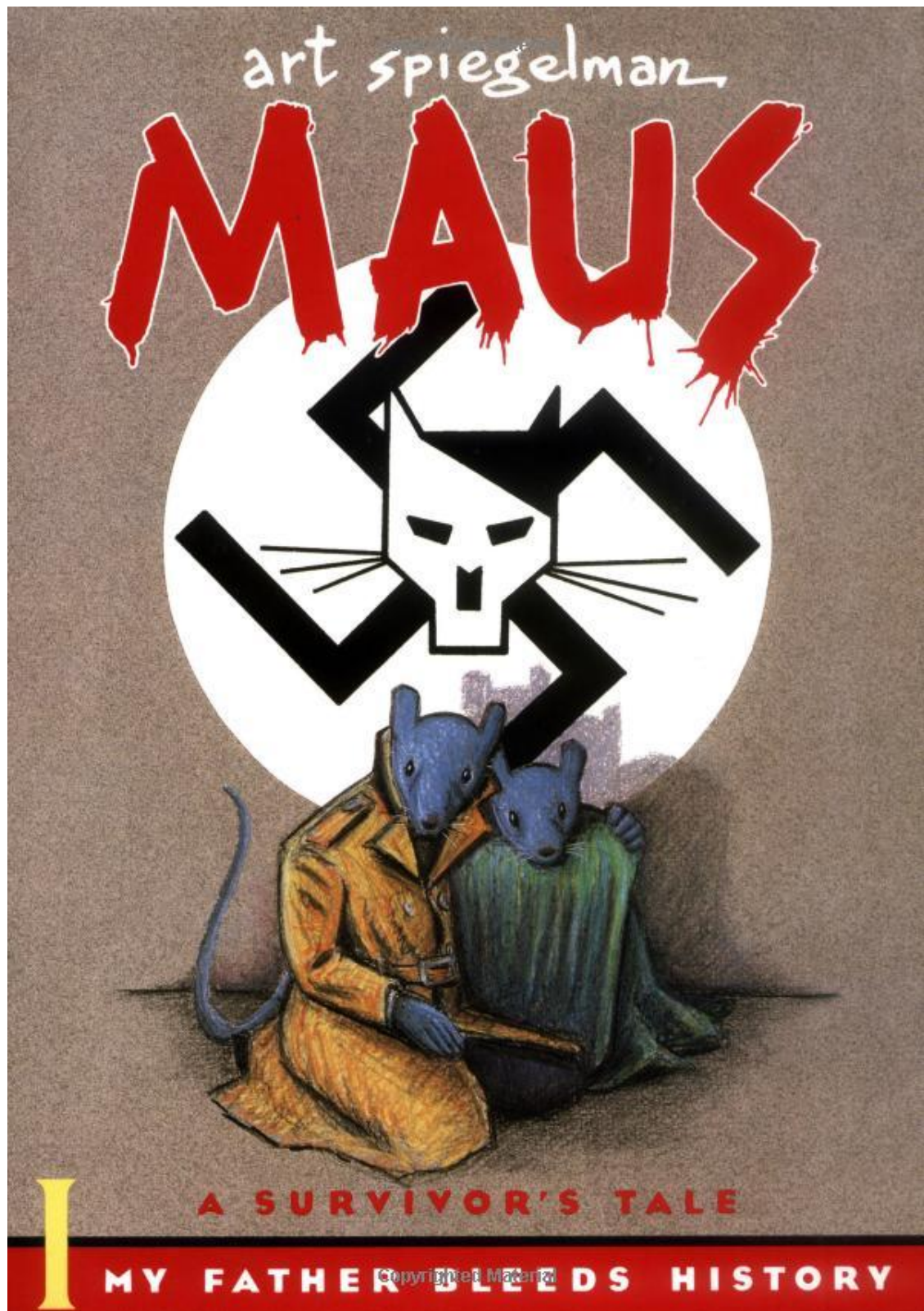


Figure 7.2 *Maus: A Survivor's Tale. My Father Bleeds History. Volume I* (spiegelman 1986: the front cover).

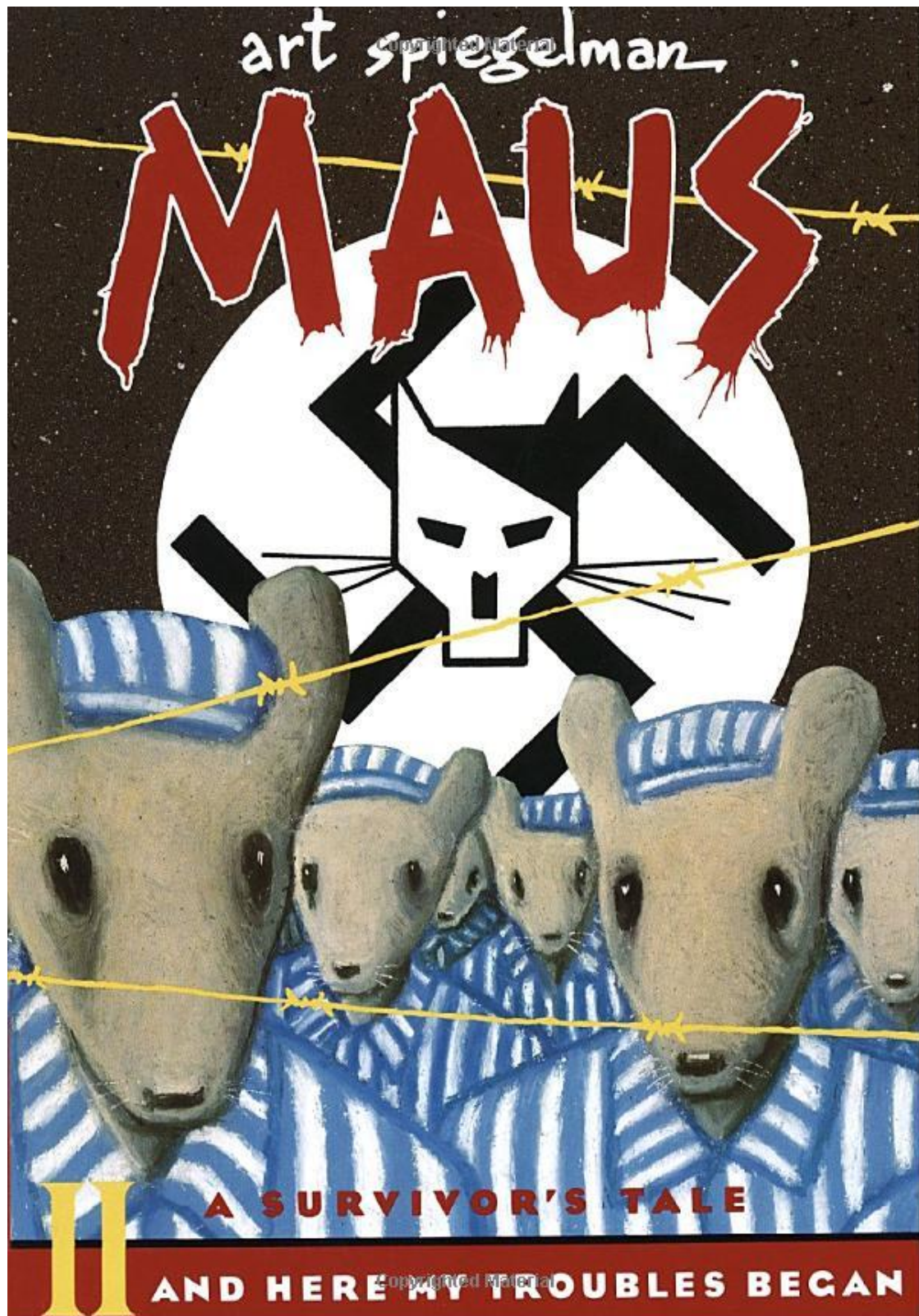


Figure 7.3 *Maus: A Survivor's Tale. And Here my Troubles Began. Volume II.* (spiegelman 1991: the front cover).

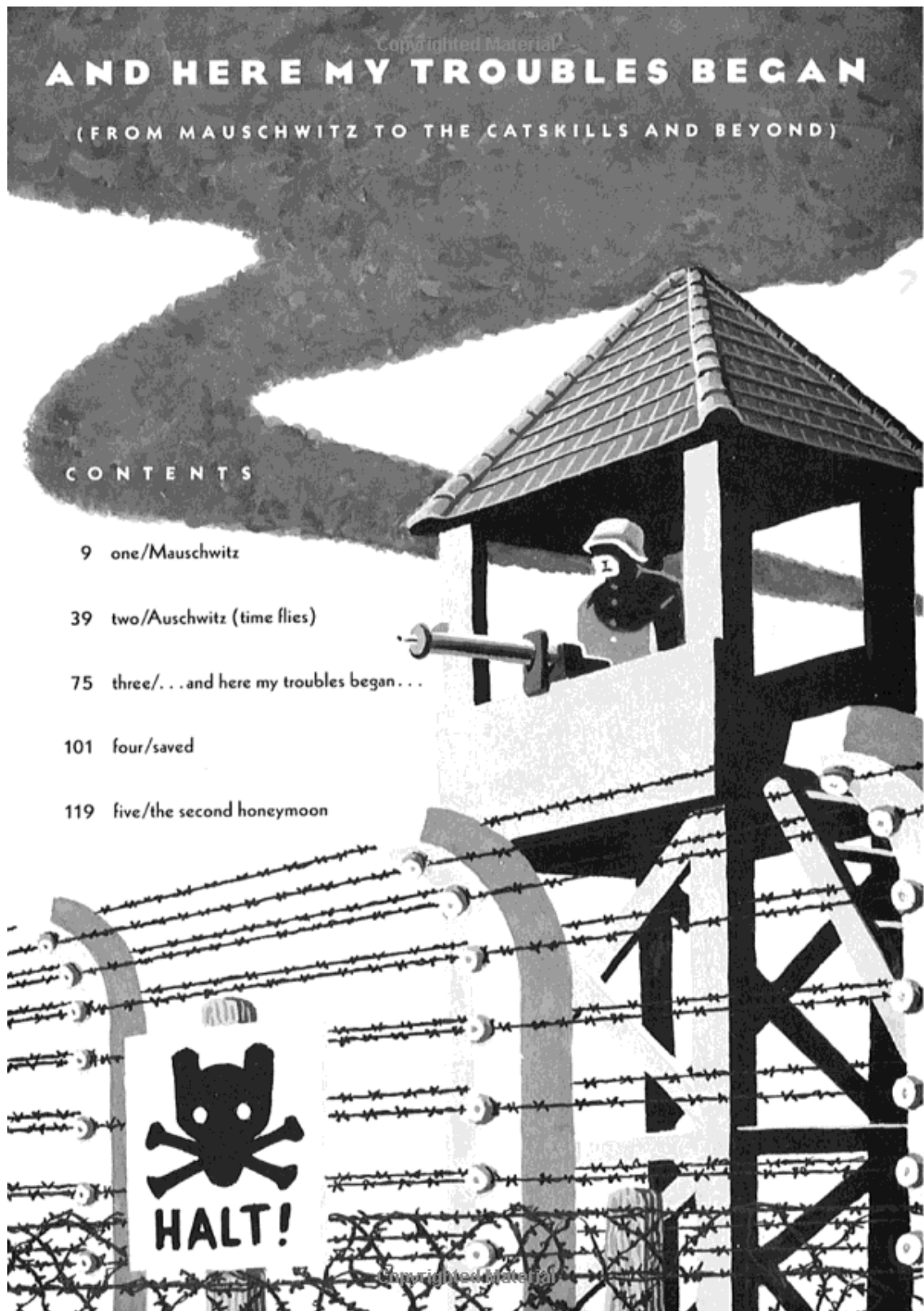


Figure 7.4 *Maus: A Survivor's Tale. And Here my Troubles Began. Volume II.* (spiegelman 1991:contents page: unpaginated).



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Figure 7.5 *Maus: A Survivor's Tale. And Here my Troubles Began. Volume II.* (spiegelman 1991:15).



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Figure 7.6 *Maus: A Survivor's Tale. And Here my Troubles Began. Volume II.* (spiegelman 1991:16).

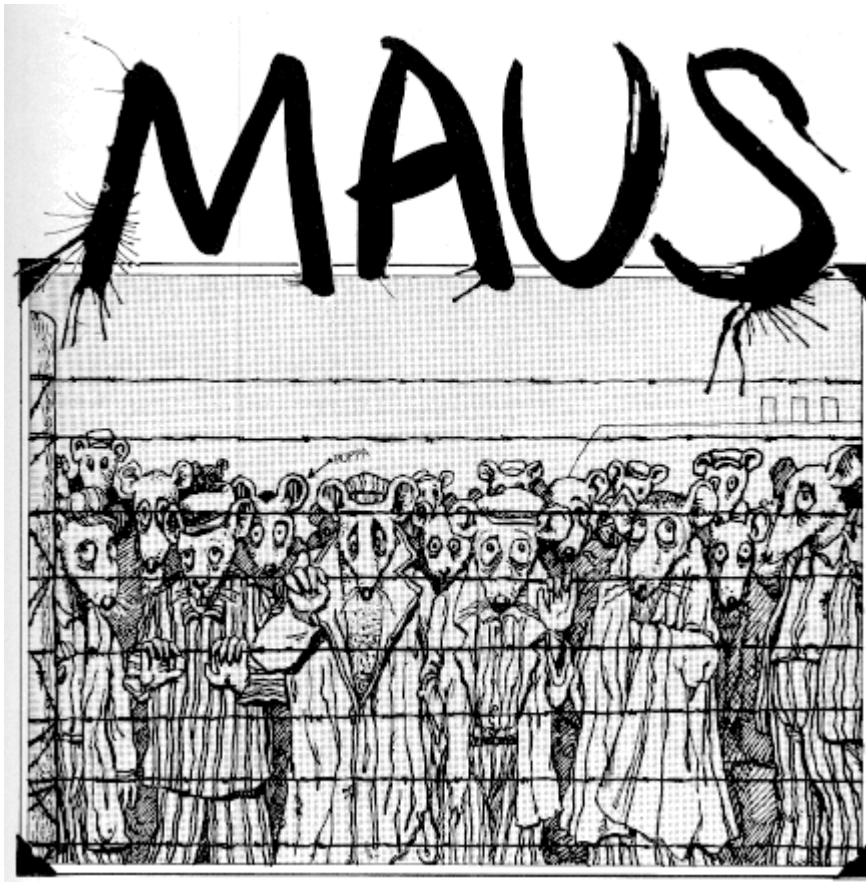


Figure 7.7 *Maus: A Survivor's Tale. And Here my Troubles Began. Volume II.* (spiegelman 1991: prologue page: unpaginated).

7.2.1.2 Pascal Croci

Dori Laub, in his essay *Bearing Witness; or, The Vicissitudes of Listening* (2003:221-229) warns of self-defence mechanisms, like denial, that often come into play when exposed to death narratives. However, there are other psychological and physical feelings that also present themselves, such as sympathy, empathy, extreme anger, and most importantly, “identification” (Laub 2003:221-229). Pascal Croci, born in 1961, researched his topic for five years before producing the graphic novel / book of pencil sketches, titled simply

Auschwitz (2005). He writes / draws of the experiences of a married couple, survivors of the death camp, where their only daughter was murdered. The story finds them in the middle of a civil war in the former Yugoslavia in 1993. They are waiting their execution as traitors, and while they wait they remember their past in Auschwitz. Once again, through the emotion of empathy and identification, author and artist Croci has created a brilliant portrayal of experiences not his own. Through the unconventional medium of pencil sketches he documents history realistically and devastatingly, and also authentically (see *Figures 7.8 — 7.11*).

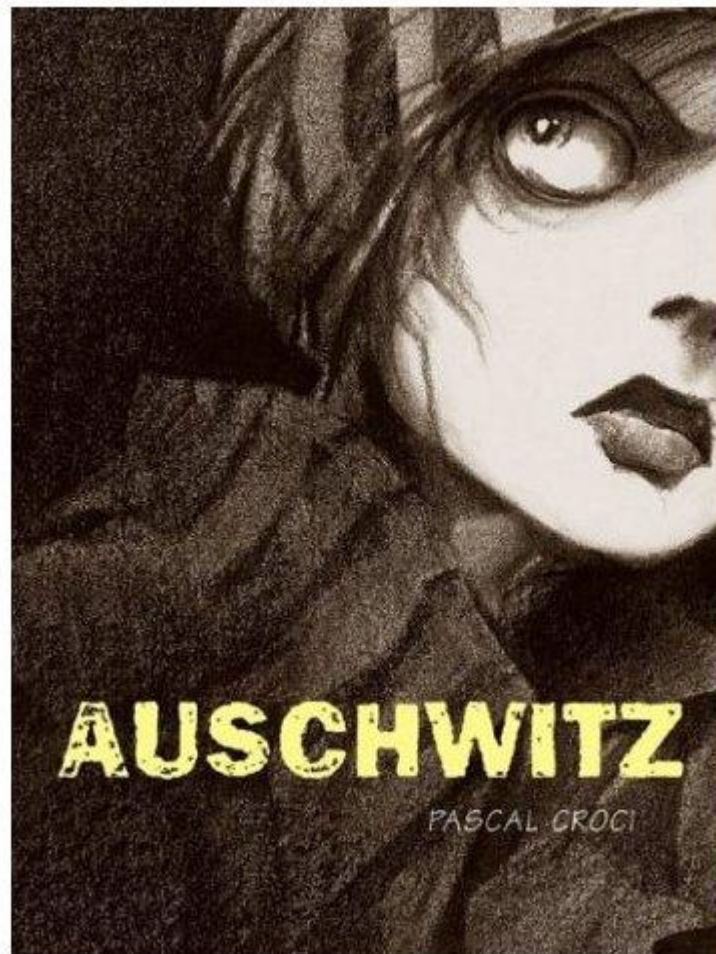


Figure 7.8 *Auschwitz* (Croci 2004: the front cover).



Figure 7.9 Auschwitz (Crocchi 2004:18).



Figure 7.10 Auschwitz (Crocchi 2004:56).

repertoire of art. Haunted by the annihilation of the Jews and based on the descriptions of his neighbours and family friends, Kubert finally decided to pen and draw (in pencil) an alternate version of history, one where his family does not emigrate and he experiences the degradation and dehumanisation of the war firsthand. He situates himself in the middle of the Warsaw ghetto as a thirteen year old with a gift for drawing. His gift saves him from being deported to Auschwitz, but not his family. The fate of his family and news of the death camps filter back to him. He decides to fight back and takes part in the famous Warsaw uprising, beginning on April 19 1943, hence the title of the book. His sketchbook art has a similar “feel” to it as Kentridge’s work does. Rough, jagged, unprocessed, and sometimes incomplete, the sketches are realistic and portray and express those experiences of ghettoised Jews — hunger, bewilderment, shock and trauma (see *Figures 7.12 — 7.14*). Placing himself at the centre of the story, he personalises the narrative, making it easy to identify and sympathise with him.



Figure 7.12 Yossel — April 19, 1943 (Kubert 2003: the front cover).



Figure 7.13 Yossel — April 19, 1943

(Kubert 2003:2).



Figure 7.14 Yossel — April 19, 1943 (Kubert 2003:54).

Once again here is a hand-drawn graphic novel filled with postmemories, beautiful and horrifying all at once. Saul Friedländer believes that it is essential to represent the unrepresentable, even if doing so “transgresses the boundaries of the permissible and tests unconventional representational and conceptual categories” (1992a:2-3; cf. Sicher 2004).

He argues that in doing so, self-identification becomes possible and the conspiracy of generational silence ends (Friedländer 1992:2-3; cf. Friedländer 1992a, 1992b and 1993; Sicher 2004:265). Kubert’s *Yossel — April 19, 1943*; Spiegelman’s *Maus*; Croci’s *Auschwitz*; and Kentridge’s *Drawings for Projection* series do just that. Their portrayals of horror and all that is associated with that repulsion transcend the ordinary and the prosaic, and in doing so not only do they bear witness to experiences not their own, they reach audiences that might not normally be exposed to such experiences. Their unconventionality makes these works unique and therefore memorable, provoking discussion and the raising of questions that are outside the norm. They catch one off guard.

These artists, including Kentridge, are all remarkable. Not only are their art works exquisite, the tales told are heinous, fascinating and poignant (and even sometimes humorous). The fact that these artists / writers allow us a glimpse into their postmemories, their unconscious minds, is astonishing. How they convey / represent these stories / (post)memories / experiences is also extraordinary. But most significant of all is their ability to empathise, extrapolate and identify with

experiences too hideous to bear / contemplate. In a materialistic, alienating contemporary society, that is the most exceptional / noteworthy / significant of all. Having discussed the (post)memory representations of three authors, this chapter now turns its focus to the medium of film and (post)memory.

7.2.2 Film and postmemory

In 1992 documentary film maker David MacDougall wrote an essay entitled *Films of Memory*. He claims that the value of films of memory lies in the ability of film “to leave representation behind and to confront the viewer once again with the primary stimuli of physical experience” (1992:267-269; cf. Burgin 1996). Furthermore,

[A] residue of a clearly *physical* nature remains in film images which are not available in verbal narratives, and its importance should not be underestimated. Film images may be reinterpreted in a variety of new contexts, but the unalterable record of appearance and place contained in them may ultimately prove to have a more profound effect upon our “memory” of history than the interpretations we attach to them (1992:267-269).

This is so apposite for Kentridge’s works: his physical remnants or traces of charcoal are interpreted one way and then when he makes changes to that very drawing, it is interpreted another way, yet it is still the “same” drawing.

Claude Morhange-Bégué in her book *Chambert: Reflections from an Ordinary Childhood* (2000) is an autobiography that focuses on her separation from her mother at an early age: the arrest of her mother by the Gestapo. She reconstructs the scene, going over it again and again, throughout the autobiography.

According to Bella Brodzki this is the same as a “traumatic flashback” (2004:131). The autobiography, written many years after the incident, indicates the incommensurability of language to describe the indescribable — the mental image is so vivid but she cannot remember or conjure up the right words to describe the incident — there is, as Brodzki points out, a “disjunctive relation of image and language to memory” (2004:131; cf. Morhange-Bégué 2000). A play by the name of *The Story I am about to Tell* was written about the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (Christov-Bakargiev 1998). It was fairly unique because it included three witnesses that had presented evidence to the TRC. The play consisted of them re-telling their testimonies every night before an audience. These survivors retold their hideous experiences. However, one night during a performance, one witness forgot his lines, despite the fact that this was his own testimony. William Kentridge wrote: “[T]he most moving moment for me was when the survivor of three years on death row had a lapse of memory. How could he forget his own story?” (Kentridge cited in Christov-Bakargiev 1998:129). This incident supports what Brodzki has claimed; and highlights how memory can fail one. The witnesses are describing memories of memories of memories, every night, yet there is bound to be a lapse in memory at some stage.

In the individual's memory actual events mix with fantasies as well as with fragments of memories from photographs, films and television broadcasts. Sociologist Marie-Claude Taranger wrote an essay in 1991 which documents an oral history project (over four hundred recorded interviews). Her essay records

that there is a universal tendency for one's personal history to be intermingled with memories of films and other productions of the media (cited in Burgin 1996). She writes that: the function of the film is clear: it completes life; it fills the holes in life. It allowed the narrators to see — "it allows them today to recount — events which they did not personally encounter, fragments of History (*sic*) which are not part of their own history" (cited in Burgin 1996:226). Taranger's results are similar to the psychoanalytical stance on screen memories. For example, one might say that a particular scene from a film "in which the parents of the young heroine are killed when they place their bodies between her and the German guns — has come to serve the narrator as a screen memory, representing the repressed fantasy of the death of her own parents" (cited in Burgin 1996:228; cf. *Chapter Six* of this thesis for details on Sigmund Freud's concept of "screen memories").

There is another case where the personal witness has appropriated the contents of another individual's life: a narrator provides detailed descriptions of conditions in the concentration camps. Conversely, in this case, the narrator had never been to a concentration camp herself. However, her brother had been incarcerated in a concentration camp in Poland during the WWII. Upon his return, he never once spoke of the conditions he experienced there to his sister. Upon his father's death he cut all ties off with his sister. Taranger's insight is as follows: "[T]he borrowed speech and images have clearly come to fill the absence of brotherly speech, and of the brother himself" (cited in Burgin 1996:228). Furthermore, she made

observations about: “[M]emories of facts [mixed] with memories of images, or of words, and even with memories of memories” (cited in Burgin 1996:228). Also,

[F]rom such heterogeneous psychical materials, the individual narrator would reconstruct her or his hybrid personal history — imposing a coherent narrative order on the discontinuous fragments (cited in Burgin 1996:228).

Victor Burgin (1996:229) draws attention to the similarity to Sigmund Freud’s “secondary revision”. Freud suggested that “the delusion owes its convincing power to the elements of historical truth which it inserts in the place of rejected reality” (cited in Burgin 1996:229).

It seems that the fictional passages of recorded history are given credibility by the passages of actually experienced events, creating a coherent narrative. One of her results posits that film serves not only as a source of memory but is also a source of authority. “Authority” here is taken from the wide societal / communal character of an experience, as if the belief “we all saw it” makes it “the truth” (Burgin 1996:229; cf. *Chapter Eight* of this thesis for the section on history and memory).

Marie-Claude Taranger, on the basis of her empirical evidence, concludes that authenticity should be viewed in other than binary terms of “true” and “false”:

[I]t is no longer conceivable to consider only the exactitude of facts or the sincerity of witnesses. It is also necessary to take into account in all their complexity the procedures which preside at the construction of the story ... Against the illusion of a simple past, which would only have to be recovered, there is thus imposed the necessity of bringing to light the multiple and changing relations which ceaselessly produce interference, in an infinite play of repetitions and variations, between the voices and the images of the

individual and the group, of a past and of its futures (cited in Burgin 1996:229).

Psychoanalyst Judith Butler writes similarly:

[W]hat are called “moments” are not distinct and equivalent units of time, for the “past” will be the accumulation and congealing of such “moments” to the point of their indistinguishability (1993:245).

However, it will also consist of that which is refused from construction, the “domain of the repressed, forgotten, and the irrecoverably foreclosed” (1993:245).

Concurring with Taranger, Victor Burgin states that the “shape-shifting hybrid objects that coalesce in psychical space from the mnemonic debris of films, photographs, television shows, and other sources of images” (1996:239), are of interest.

These “hybrid objects” are situated in part in an imaginary world and in part in a real world. Marie-Claude Taranger’s study attests to our constant ability to confuse ourselves with others, fictive and real. “Identification is the privileged mechanism by which other histories and memories become our own” (Burgin 1996:239). William Kentridge’s films are “hybrids”: concoctions created out of his memories and others’, with the use of photographs, films and other visual aids / images.

Film is an important medium to expose tragedies and to raise questions. It also has a far-reaching effect — engaging an audience who might not normally have access to, or interest in, international atrocities.

With regard to aesthetic representation and considering whether or not the Holocaust / genocidal atrocities / images of apartheid / Palestine should be portrayed by the visual / artistic / fine arts is invariably linked to the question of how one would attempt to do so.

David Bathrick, in an attempt to address this question / ethical crisis, gives the example of the nine-and-a-half hour film entitled *Shoah*, which was made by Claude Lanzmann. He believes that this film works through the past images by both “repudiating” and “reclaiming” the Holocaust image (2004:294). Lanzmann himself expressly states that this “cinematic treatise is not a documentary and is not representational” (1991:96). Rather, all the interviews of the survivors that he films, both perpetrator and victim alike (he also includes interviews of secondary witnesses) are not intended to recover memory but “to explore the process of reconstructing and reliving the past in the present” (Bathrick 2004:295). Claude Lanzmann refers to his film as “imageless images,” “because what we see on the screen is more absence of an image than an attempted replica of the unspeakable deed” (cited in Bathrick 2004:295; cf. Lanzmann 1991; 2004). Furthermore, this “absence” is referred to by Gertrud Koch as an “elision which marks the boundary

between what is aesthetically and humanly imaginable and the unimaginable dimension of the annihilation” (1989:96).

The belief that an artist has undeviating and complete access to the visual portrayal of an incident(s) is challenged by Lanzmann. He and his cinematic masterpiece serve to “remind us that there can be no full presence but only the marking of the past as object of reconstruction based on traces and traces of traces” (Bathrick 2004:295).

In addition, Bathrick states that “[T]he traces in *Shoah* are sites of memory in the present — the pans of the rich, green fields of Treblinka and Auschwitz today”; these sites of memory defy / dispute imagination — the challenge is to imagine creatively, to transcend, the very “normalcy of these traces in order to produce or even hallucinate the horror of what was” (2004:295-296; cf. the introduction of this chapter). Artist C. K. Williams visited Auschwitz, where he was stunned by the empty barracks, the empty crematoria — this was not what he had imagined — yet it is through memoirists that he can imagine what it was like because the actual site does not deliver any real idea / imagery of what it had been like there. It is through the different characters / individuals who wrote (and assumingly artists who artistically represented their experiences / memories) about their experiences that one is able to glean a realistic image of what it was like (1999:10). This dissertation puts forward the author’s opinion that Auschwitz has been sanitised in a way — and in a sense cleansed. These are just ordinary buildings that belie

what really happened there. Gertrud Koch believes that the film *Shoah*, which defies chronology and a pre-given path, is less a documentary or historical epic, and is more a piece of modern art, “drawing its force from the affirmation that art is not representation but presentation, not reproduction but expression” (1989:20). In other words, one can go beyond representation, and engagement with the evil of apartheid should be one of expression over representation. Theodor W. Adorno himself wrote similarly: “[P]erennial suffering has as much right to expression as the tortured have to scream ... hence it may have been wrong to say that no poem could be written after Auschwitz” (1951 / 1991 / 2003:283). Linked to the concept of film is the concept of voyeurism and spectator identification, which will now be investigated.

7.2.2.1 Voyeurism and spectator identification

Jean-Paul Sartre’s theory of consciousness is that consciousness cannot grasp itself (1957). Sartre’s book *Being and Nothingness* (1957) grapples with this very concept. Reflection or categorisation turns the subject into an object. Because subjects do not have fixed characteristics, the moment they try to categorise themselves, they become nothing more than a definition, pigeonholed and limited. Sartre warns of individuals going to the extreme of defining themselves as a fixed set of categories, so that they are then perceived as pure nothingness. However, no representation can capture one entirely. It is the poser that Sartre has tried to deal with: one can neither be totally defined; neither can one escape all definition (Sartre 1957). One is the quest for oneself. Are Kentridge’s films — based on his

image / representation — a quest for his consciousness? Does he see himself as others see him? Does he draw / represent himself as Soho/Felix as he thinks others see him, or as he sees himself, a mirror of one's self? Are his films a mirror for his own subjectivity? Kentridge's subjectivity is riddled with guilt, remorse, responsibility and mourning / loss / death. It is significant to note then that in the last film of the *Drawings for Projection* series, *Tide Table*, Soho/Felix is represented as all alone, alienated and cut off from the rest of his family and the rest of the world (see *Figure 7.15*).



Figure 7.15 Drawing from *Tide Table* (Alemani 2006:92).

According to Victor Burgin (1996:29), individuals inhabit two separate worlds: the “internal” — the mental and private world — and the “external”, that is, the public

and physical world. Of course, psychoanalysis has provided one with the theory of the unconscious (Freud 1915 / 1991b). Kentridge presents us with both his “internal” and “external” — references to the unconscious (“internal”), such as the drawings of the insides of his brain; and images of everyday items realistically portrayed (the “external”), such as the bakelite telephones, the typewriters and even tea cups and coffee-plungers (see *Figures 7.16 — 7.22*). This is, for the writer of this thesis, another element of “*fortuna*”, as defined by Kentridge (see *Chapter Five* for more details). Ari Sitas describes Kentridge’s “*fortuna*” as “spontaneous inventiveness, even anarchy, and a relishing of the accidental, the transformative (in its literal sense), but there is also [a] discriminating mind that channels the energy into meaningful statement” (2001:63).

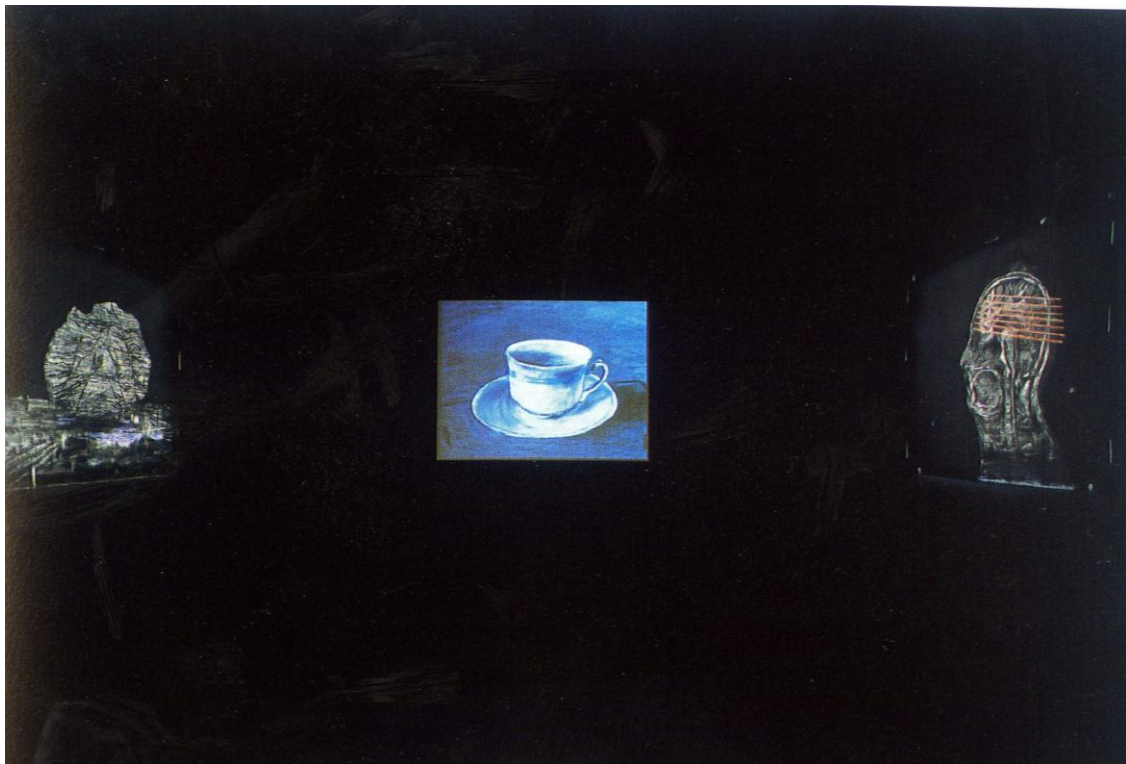


Figure 7.16 Photograph of installation that exhibited drawings from the film *WEIGHING ... and WANTING* (Christov-Bakargiev 1998:135).



Figure 7.17 Photograph of the installation that exhibited drawings from the film *WEIGHING ... and WANTING* (Cameron, Christov-Bakargiev and Coetzee 1999:77).

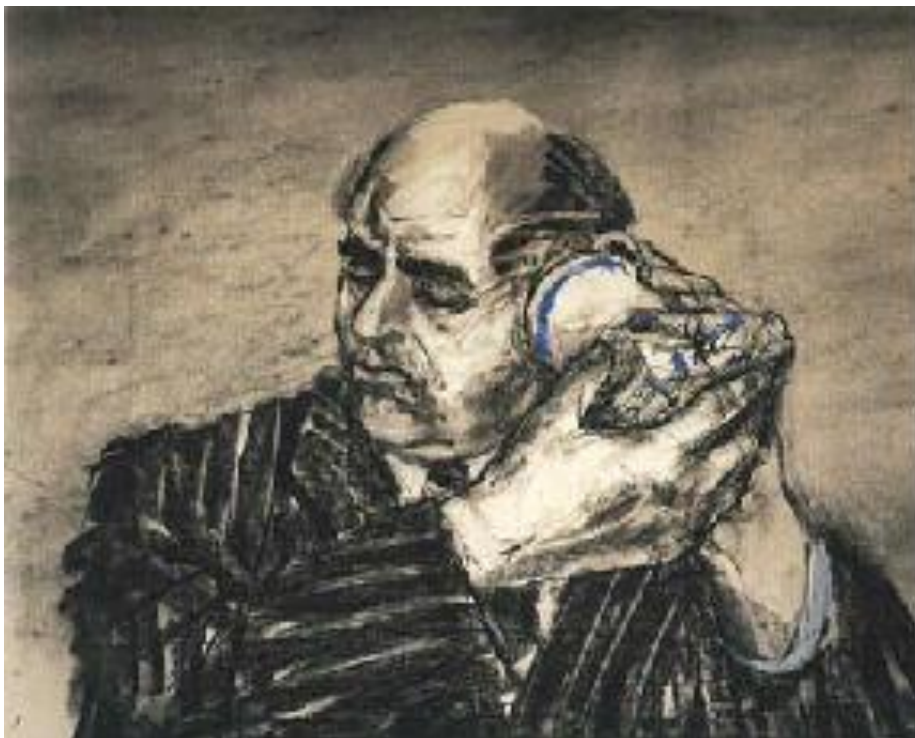


Figure 7.18 A close-up of the drawing from the installation exhibiting drawings from the film *WEIGHING ... and WANTING* (Cameron, Christov-Bakargiev and Coetzee 1999:77).



Figure 7.19 Drawing from the film *History of the Main Complaint* (Cameron, Christov-Bakargiev and Coetzee 1999:90).

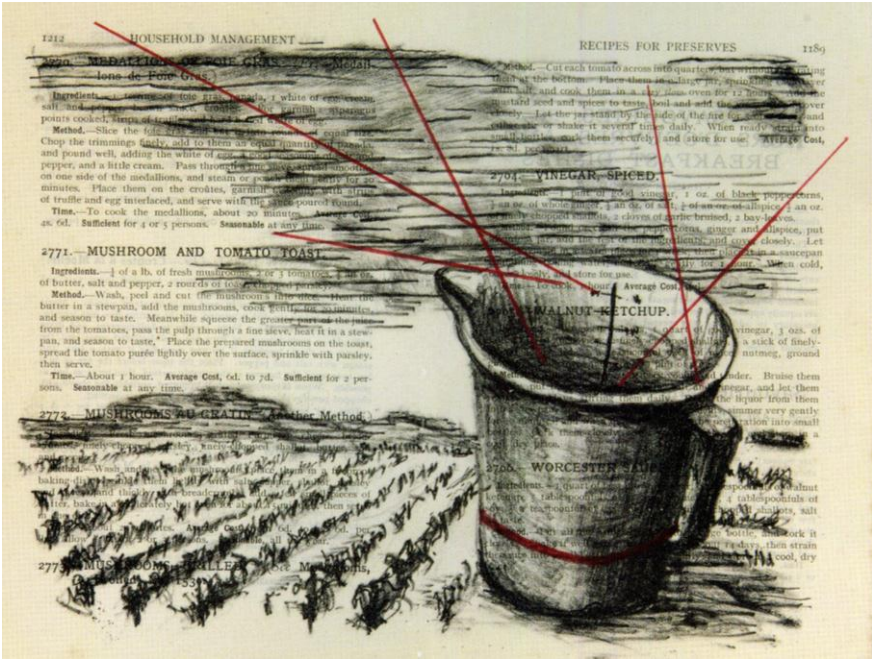


Figure 7.20 Mrs. Beaton's Household Management (Jug) William Kentridge, 2000 (Stewart 2006:86). Lithograph in black with hand-drawn red lines, on page spreads from Mrs. Beaton's Book of Household Management (1906) on Vélin d'Arches Blanc 250 gsm paper.

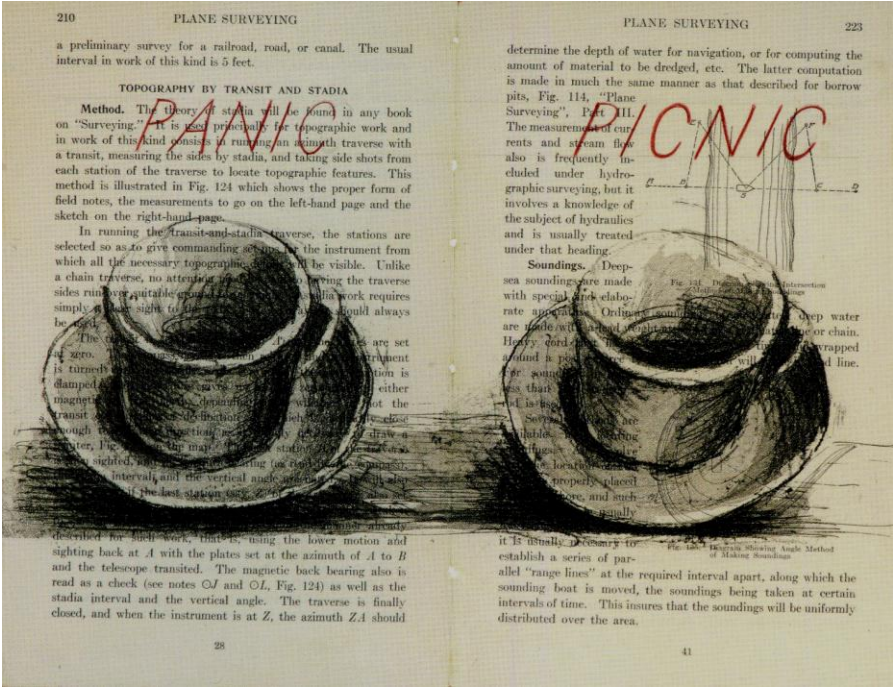


Figure 7.21 Drawing, from installation Stereoscope (Alemani 2006:65).

Laura Mulvey, a well-known feminist author, who introduced the concept of the “male gaze” into film studies, wrote in her book, *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*: “[T]he voyeuristic-scopophilic look is a crucial part of traditional filmic pleasure” (1975:45; cf. Burgin 1996). Roland Barthes writes about the “[A]uthor, reader, spectator or voyeur” of representation; all of these subjects “desire”, but of course it is the voyeur who does so obviously or “visibly” (Barthes 1977b:69).

Jean-Paul Sartre (1957), in his chapter *The Look*, from his famous work *Being and Nothingness*, describes the position of the voyeur as “*being-as-object for the Other*”:

[H]ere I am, bent over the key hole; suddenly I hear a footstep. I shudder as a wave of shame sweeps over me. Somebody has seen me. I straighten up. My eyes run over the deserted corridor. It was a false alarm. I breathe a sigh of relief.

Sartre however, states that even though he is petrified, he continues with his voyeurism,

I shall feel my heart beat fast, and I shall detect the slightest noise, the slightest creaking of the stairs. Far from disappearing with my first alarm, the Other is present everywhere, below me, above me, in neighbouring rooms, and I continue to feel profoundly my *being-for-others* (1957:369-370).

In chapter four (“*The Intertwining — The Chiasm*”) of his unfinished work, *The Visible and the Invisible*, Maurice Merleau-Ponty writes:

[S]ince the seer is caught up in what he sees; it is still himself he sees: there is a fundamental narcissism of all vision. And thus, for the same reason, the vision he exercises, he also undergoes from the things, such that, as many painters have said, I feel myself looked at by the things, my activity is equally passivity — which is the second and more profound sense of

narcissism: not to see in the outside, as others see it, the contour of a body one inhabits, but especially to be seen by the outside, to exist within it, to emigrate into it, to be seduced, captivated, alienated by the phantom, so that the seeing and the visible reciprocate one another and we no longer know which sees and which is seen (1968:139; cf. Burgin 1996).

The author of this study believes that this applies directly to William Kentridge and his “portraits” as Soho/Felix.

In *The Scoptophilic Instinct and Identification*, a paper written in 1935, Otto Fenichel states: “the eye plays a double part. It is not only actively sadistic but also passively receptive” (1953:375; cf. Burgin 1996). Included in this book is a citation by Géza Róheim on “looking-glass-magic”, in which the mirror presents an individual with his/her own ego in the form of an external body, which erases “the dividing–line between ego and non-ego” (Fenichel 1953:377; cf. Burgin 1996).

According to Michel Serres (Kroker and Cook 1988) and Michel Foucault (1970) the disembodied eye is a central metaphor for contemporary experiences: the eye is reversible, expressing in its symbolic effects the interiority of the retina of the viewer; it is the apparatus of surveillance and an eternal mirroring-effect of the possessive “I” of the self. It represents the modern experience which circles back upon itself in an endless mirroring-effect. In the symbology of the “eye”, a mirroring-effect is in progress in which the terms of the relation (signifier and signified) retract back and forth as image and counter-image in the endless curvature of a tautology (Kroker and Cook 1988). It is the eye / I in a society which privileges the position of voyeur. The eye motif emphasises the violence of

intrusion, the horror of the loss of privacy. This is apparent in *Mine*, where the viewer is exposed to the loss of privacy endured by the miners who sleep together in crowded bunks, and shower together as if in prison. Thus, self-reflexively, Kentridge burdens the viewer with the responsibility to see the awful conditions under which the miners work.

The “eye” and vision are central themes throughout Kentridge’s work — from images of a close-up of an eye filling the screen at the end of *Monument*, to the images in *History of the Main Complaint* where he, or the character of Soho/Felix, looks repeatedly at himself in his car’s rear-view mirror. There are also many scenes where Kentridge draws his character, Felix Teitlebaum, looking at himself in a mirror. In *Felix in Exile* and *History of the Main Complaint*, there are extreme close-ups of Kentridge’s eye — circled and highlighted. A more disturbing image of the eye is the close-up of Harry the hobo’s eye, at the end of *Monument*. Harry is pinioned onto a pedestal — a monument ironically donated by Soho Eckstein the “great benefactor” (whose philanthropy is bought and paid for by the labour of individuals — miners and workers). Harry’s eye seems to hold all the pain and suffering in the world along with a resignation to his position. Harry, Christ-like, is tied to stone, holding up a monumental rock, unable to move, with only the sound of his disturbing breathing as the credits roll.

Film theorist and academic, J. P. Telotte (cited in Kolb 1990) suggests that when fascination with doubling becomes the dominant force in someone's life, as it has

with Kentridge, s/he clearly runs the risk of becoming little more than a copy him/herself, potentially less human than the very images that have been fashioned in his/her likeness. This is fascinating because, for Kentridge, one must consider where reality begins and reality ends. It becomes difficult to disengage the characters from Kentridge and his life. The world is a place in which distinctions and differences between realities and images have been effaced. The real becomes not so much what can be produced as "that which is already reproduced" (Baudrillard 1983:122). In other words, it is an identification between an artificial construct (Kentridge's characters) and the real (Kentridge himself). There is also the appearance of being real — in *Johannesburg, 2nd Greatest City after Paris*, Felix Teitlebaum's dreams about his affair with Mrs. Eckstein do have a dream-like quality, and he does daydream about her while he is in the bath. Yet Kentridge also deals with the very real themes of social guilt and responsibility, the problems with capitalism and the evils of apartheid. He also includes a portrayal of his wife Anne in *WEIGHING ... and WANTING*⁴. The viewer questions what is real and what is not.

There is also the concept of voyeurism for the spectator as the audience watch Felix Teitlebaum having sex with Mrs. Eckstein (in *Johannesburg, 2nd Greatest City after Paris* and *Sobriety, Obesity & Growing Old*). Another voyeuristic aspect to his work is the view into the very depths of the mines and the horror that one sees there: decapitations, close ups of pained faces which also reflect the grotesquery

⁴ This researcher has had the opportunity to meet William Kentridge's wife, Anne Stanwix.

within, an overwhelming site / sight of blackness. The horror of the mines and the continuous recurrence of decapitated heads again appear to allude to Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1975) — whose main character, Kurtz, has looked into darkness — and to Frederic Nietzsche's comment:

[W]hoever fights monsters should see to it that in the process he does not become a monster. And when you look long into an abyss, the abyss also looks into you (Nietzsche 1979a:99; also quoted in *Chapter Five*).

One sees this in the images shown in *Johannesburg, 2nd Greatest City after Paris, Monument, Mine and Felix in Exile*. *Mine* combines a cross-section: in the mine, underground workers are working in a very dark and depressing setting. This is juxtaposed with Soho Eckstein in his luxurious and very comfortable bed above — sometimes sleeping and sometimes using his bed as an office desk. The images of the mine include images of the dormitories — dismal sleeping quarters and rows of men showering. These images include close-ups of severed heads lying on hard shelf-like beds — reminiscent of the beds in concentration camps and death camps in World War II. The hostels are divided into minuscule segments, or what William Gibson calls “coffins” (1993:124), and which contrast strongly with the large opulent homes of the upper classes. The miners’ existences — sleeping and living in huge concrete slabs and working in monoliths of stone — are alienated, with little or no personal contact. The heads look like skulls, not human, similar to the decapitated heads on the shelf in *Johannesburg, 2nd Greatest City after Paris*, and a recurring theme throughout his work. These are extremely depressing images, which also serve to dehumanise the individuals. As Kentridge himself has stated “everything has been ... de-humanised” (Oppelt 1999:6). The heads are

themselves a thing of beauty, and refer to an aesthetic tradition as well. This is a stark contradiction: one generally sees their beauty before realising their brutality, which tends to unnerve one. Like the death throes of “Nandi” in *Felix in Exile*, they are exquisite to look at, but one cannot separate the macabre qualities from the beauty. This makes them somehow more shocking than something that is simply ugly and grotesque and which prompts a straightforward response. Viewing these images is uneasy, challenging and confusing.

In *Mine*, individuals are merely tools to excavate gold or coal. They are a form of resource — dispensable and replaceable. One sees the dream-like imagery of a coffee plunger that makes its way down from and through Soho Eckstein’s bed, becoming a lift shaft and then becoming the drawing of a transatlantic slave ship — which was constructed in that way in order to fit as many slaves as possible. The images of slaves and the relevance to the miners are obvious. Mine workers are nothing but slave labour. Soho Eckstein’s bed / office desk becomes littered with ticker tape papers from an accounting machine — and includes mine workers as part of the waste and a part of the scene of a mine dump — industrial and environmental waste juxtaposed with a rhinoceros, which represents nature in direct opposition to environmental decay and devastation. Soho Eckstein clears his bed / office desk with one sweep of his arm, knocking everything off to allow him to play with his new pet project — a rhinoceros (see *Figure 7.22* and *Figure 7.23*).

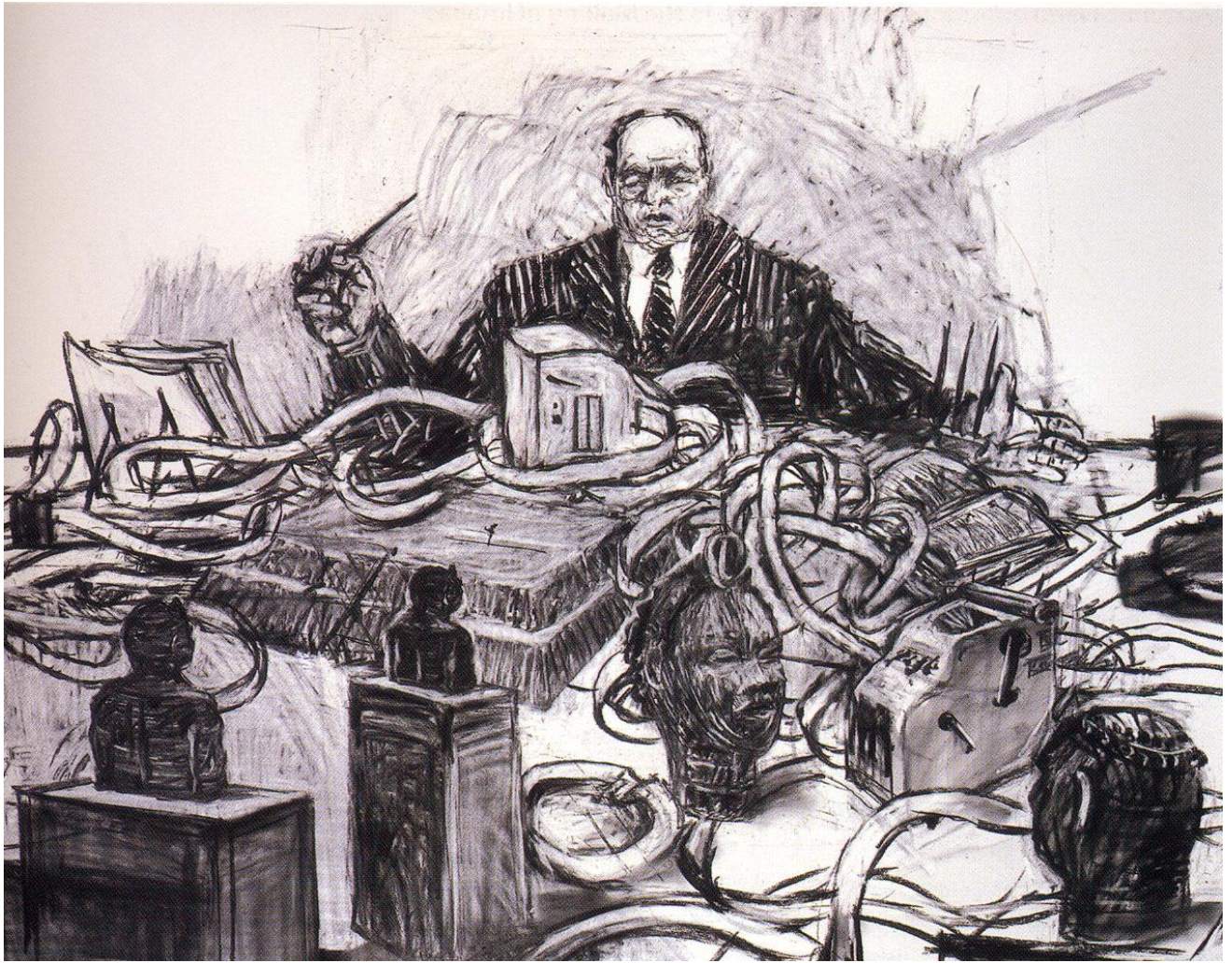


Figure 7.22 Drawing from *Mine* (Cameron, Christov-Bakargiev and Coetzee 1999:115).



Figure 7.23 Drawing from *Mine* (Cameron, Christov-Bakargiev and Coetzee 1999:115).

Kentridge has also made a very short, and quite bizarre film titled *ECHO: scan slide bottle* (1998). In this film he uses a hand-held camera to trace his near-naked physical body very closely. At times, the images, disembodied fragments of sections of his arms, legs and stomach, are disturbing (see *Figure 7.24* and *Figure 7.25*). This is because if one is not aware of the overall theme of the film (the tracing of his physiological being), one is simply presented with images of portions of skin. These unattached images of patches of skin, which are very hirsute,

together with enlarged pores, beam out of the screen. At first the film *ECHO: scan slide bottle* seems completely contrasted with the films in his *Drawings for Projection* series. Firstly, with regard to the content of the films, the former is real while the latter is imagined. Secondly, the one is in documentary black and white style, in direct opposition to the charcoal hand-drawn animations of his series. Thirdly, and most importantly, the one deals with Kentridge's corporeality while the others deal with his unconscious psyche (or a part thereof). However, there are also blatant similarities. A closer look reveals that they are all traces of his being in terms of cinematic style. All are astonishingly intimate — a nakedness laid bare for the world to see (literally and metaphorically — his body and his mind). All are translucent in their intimate portrayals. They all evoke a sense of guilty voyeurism in the viewers. They also all shed some light on his identity: a middle-aged man caught in a perpetual present constantly pre-occupied and tormented with psychological grappling's of individual and collective memories of guilt and responsibility.

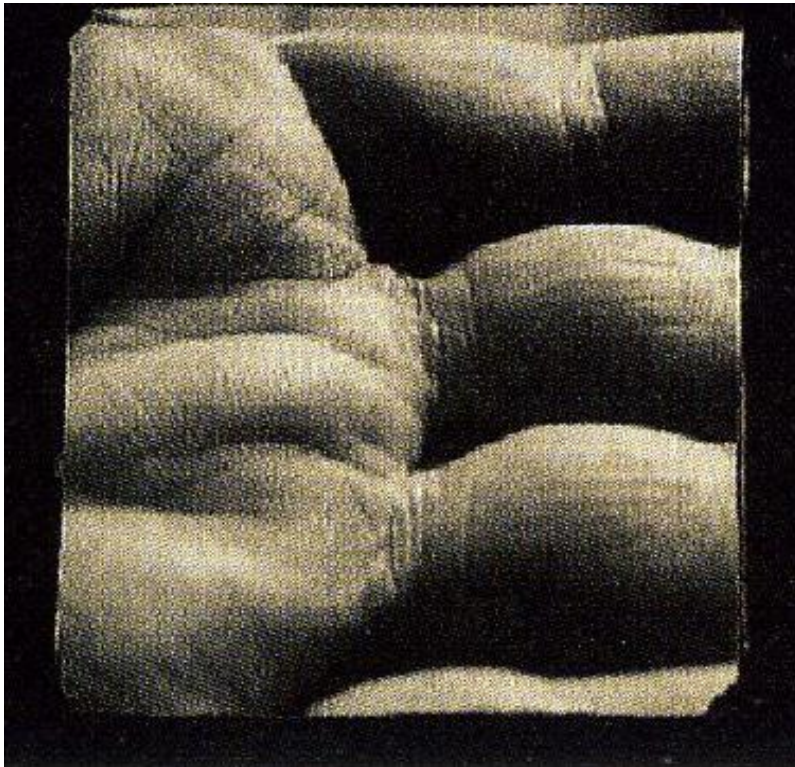


Figure 7.24 A photograph still from *ECHO: scan slide bottle* (Benezra, Boris, Cooke, Sitas and Cameron 2001:126).



Figure 7.25 A photograph still from *ECHO: scan slide bottle* (Benezra, Boris, Cooke, Sitas and Cameron 2001:126).

7.2.2.2 Voyeurism and aesthetics

The concept of voyeurism is of course linked directly to that of aesthetics because the spectator wants to view images that are visually, or aesthetically pleasing. Orly Lubin (2004) asks the question with regard to the aesthetisation of the Holocaust: does the aesthetic form of film portraying these atrocities in any way compromise the horror of the Holocaust? Are there any other forms of aesthetics that are better suited to portraying the Holocaust, forms that induce more personal empathy, more insight into the atrocities? Film *per se* uses many different techniques, and many different fields come together to make up a film. All contribute to the production of a film: cinematographers, hairstylists, make-up artists, wardrobe artists, actors and directors. This process produces a very mediated form of art — many decisions come into play. Therefore the result is a more accessible form of representation. Film is a useful art form / medium to sustain memory. Fictional films specifically are distributed widely and are very successful at confronting an audience with such horrors in an identifiable and non-threatening form. With regard to Kentridge's beautiful cinematic drawings, even while acknowledging the power of the moving image — they do present an inherent danger. One can manipulate the story, and with it history; one can delete the political and social contexts; one can ignore the horrific scenes, erasing them from the story and history; and most importantly, the audience can become enthralled with the exquisite beauty of the pure aesthetics even while watching atrocities being perpetrated. For Orly Lubin (2004) there is the foremost danger of ignoring the ethical aspects of the real events as they are portrayed, aestheticised and dramatised. The audience judges the film by its

aesthetic appearance — beautiful camera shots, brilliant acting, stunning choices of locations, colours and scenery — rather than by judging the film's ethical meanings, consequences and repercussions. In his essay *The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility* (2002), Walter Benjamin focuses specifically on these questions. One pertinent question stands out: is film a worthwhile form of learning about the Holocaust? Does it trivialise or bastardise the memories of the survivors and victims? Is film merely about exploitation, or financial gain — “blood money”? Does the medium debase the lives of those survivors? How does a visual medium transcend the limitations of language, and thus communicate beyond language? In this age, where the screen or the visual replaces the importance of the verbal, do the very individuals onscreen make the survivors' testimony more real, more believable? Is the medium more effective at communicating descriptive scenes? Are survivors' testimonies — transmuted through different cinematic devices, such as the cinematographer's camera lens — “more-real-than-real” (Baudrillard cited in Smart 1993:122)? Or are they less effective or less believable because of the very use of these devices? How much more accessible are testimonies when given in a cinematic form?

With regard to voyeurism and the “spectacularization of death” (Lubin 2004:227), feature films attempt to avoid elements of fantasy⁵. There is a very real danger of promoting an ethical indifference that is a by-product of aestheticisation. Only

⁵ This question links with that of “pornography of violence” and again one is referred to Dean (2004).

Lubin brings our attention to the dangers of what is referred to as “Holocaust pornography” (2004:231). He explains that

[W]hile some films genuinely investigate the sexualization of power, others eroticize death and exploit, for purposes of arousal and profit, the sadomasochistic dynamics inherent in the relations between victim and perpetrator (Lubin 2004:231).

Only Lubin also draws attention to the distraction that beauty creates — a beautiful actor, a stunning location, an exquisite dress — thereby once again highlighting the conflict between ethics and aesthetics (2004). While Lubin is specifically referring to Holocaust feature films, one can easily apply his analysis to Kentridge’s hand-drawn animated films and the aesthetics thereof. Kentridge’s films contain many images that are simultaneously horrifying and beautiful, such as decapitated heads with lovely faces. David Trend believes that beautiful artistic images of violence “imbue transcendental meaning, even beauty” (2007:118). Roland Barthes was of the opinion that violent portrayals of human suffering serve to calm and placate one, because one views the images as having already occurred and therefore very much entrenched in the past. In addition the events portrayed happened to “them, not us” in a distant country (cited in Trend 2007:118). These images serve as evidence that such pain will not be repeated. David Levi Strauss, in his book titled *Between the Eyes: Essays on Photography and Politics*, writes: “[S]uch images do not compel us to action, but to acceptance. The action has already been taken, and we are not implicated” (2003:81)⁶.

⁶ For a detailed reading and exploration of “Holocaust pornography”; “pornography of violence”; “empathy fatigue”; and the desensitisation / numbness when viewing violent images, see Carolyn

David Bathrick also refers to Theodor W. Adorno's statement that to write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric (2004). He believes that Adorno was concerned with the perils inherent in the organised framework of active aesthetic experience. He believes "barbaric" refers to the "inevitable feelings of pleasure evoked by certain historically contingent aesthetic expressions — the notion, more specifically, that a transfiguration can occur and that some of the horror of the event might thereby be ameliorated" (Bathrick 2004:294). There is a danger in this (one is referred back to the mention of Kentridge's beautiful drawings of hideous topics). In his rearticulating of Adorno's statement, Bathrick thinks that it is more important to hold close the road to an "aesthetics of postmemory" (Hirsch 1997),

as a reconstructing, even a working through, of the image as fetish and as iconic staple of the collective pictorial archive so necessary for the retrieval of Holocaust memory in the first place (Bathrick 2004:294).

However, in the opinion of this study's author, viewing these images or creating these artistic visions can also be seen or experienced as cathartic. At the beginning of psychoanalysis, Sigmund Freud introduced the term "abreaction" (Rycroft 1972; cf. Freud 1899a and 1899b; 1991). This refers to the expressing / identifying / discharging of emotion that is attached to repressed emotion relating to a specific experience. Charles Rycroft wrote that in the early days of psychoanalysis, abreaction or catharsis as it is sometimes referred to, was believed to be highly therapeutic irrespective of whether or not the individual understood or could trace the importance of the repressed emotion / experience

Dean (2004). William Kentridge has the following comment on the subject: "desensitisation becomes another form of disremembering" (cited in Christov-Bakargiev 1998:49).

(1972). Basically if one watched a film in which the character's parents died, and one had many repressed emotions relating to the death of one's own parents, then one would emote during this episode. This would be because it would unleash those very repressed emotions that one had repressed.

With regard to the dream-like quality of life, Victor Burgin writes the following: Eddie Constantine, an actor portraying a character who acts in B-grade movies, in the short film *La Paresse*, directed by Jean-Luc Godard, refuses an offer of sex from a go-getting starlet. He turns down her offer because he is loath to get dressed all over again (1996). Alain Bergala, a film theorist, writes the following in response to this scene:

Eddie Constantine marvellously embodies that very special state given by an immense lassitude, an apparent inertia which is in fact a state of great porosity to the strangeness of the world, a mixture of torpor, of loss of reality and a somewhat hallucinatory vivacity of sensations ... Godard speaks to us of this very special way of being in the world (cited Burgin 1996:171).

So too are Kentridge's portrayals of "hallucinatory reality" in his films.

Dan Cameron, on writing about Kentridge, also asks whether or not "any visual artist working today has the necessary tools to produce representations of vast complex cultural and/or political issues" (1999:43). He answers his own question, by stating that Kentridge, in his *Drawings for Projection* series,

provides unexpected insight into how a single person [Soho/Felix] can become the repository of an entire culture's ideas and history, and how this can be transmitted in turn through the audience's instinctual responses to a character's behaviour, bypassing temporarily the ideological basis for the beliefs underlying that behaviour (1999:46).

This chapter now focuses on photography, memory and the concepts of absence and presence and the representation of traumata.

7.2.2.3 Photography and representation

In *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (1981), Roland Barthes' last work, he focuses on the legend of Orpheus. According to Greek mythology, Orpheus was a musician with the ability to enchant plants and animals with his music. He married a nymph, Eurydice. Unfortunately she soon died after having been bitten by a poisonous snake. Devastated by her death, Orpheus followed Eurydice to the underworld. Using his music he enchanted the underworld deities (Persephone) into releasing her. There was one condition. Orpheus had to escort Eurydice to the upper world without casting his gaze upon her. He did look upon her though, with dire consequences — she disappeared completely:

... yearning to see her with his own eyes,
through love he turned,
and with his gaze she slipped away and down.
He stretched out his arms,
struggling to embrace and be embraced,
but unlucky and unhappy he grasped nothing ...

(Ov. Meta. Bk:11 Ln. 61-66; tr. Morford & Lenardon 1977).

For Barthes, a photograph becomes the gaze of Orpheus guaranteeing the "absence — as presence" in what he calls the "*noeme*", that is, the certainty that "*that-has-been*" (1981:96). The photograph is pure representation, and contains reality and the past. In other words, if Orpheus had done what he was told to do — that is, not look at his wife (which represents absence) — Eurydice would have continued to exist (presence). Yet the photograph captures the subject (or body; or

borrowing from Jean-Paul Sartre, the fact of “*being-in-itself*” (Sartre 1957; cf. Flew 1979:313) as an object (Wiseman 1989; cf. Moriarty 1991). The photograph is a testament of lost time and lost memories. You know that the person existed because s/he is in the photograph. For Barthes, in photography, the presence of the thing (at a certain past moment) is never metaphoric. Furthermore, in a “photograph ... the past is as certain as the present, what we see on paper is as certain as what we touch” (Kroker and Cook 1988:157). In his film *Sobriety, Obesity & Growing Old*, Kentridge challenges this idea. There is a scene where Soho Eckstein is at his desk at work. He looks mournfully at the framed photograph of his wife. Instead of seeing what he expected to see, that is, a fixed image of his wife, he is instead shown a mini-film of his wife cavorting with Felix Teitlebaum.

In his book, Roland Barthes (1981) also links photography, history and the mother figure. He focuses on the mother figure in relation to the question of history, for his Mother (*sic*) represents his origins. A photograph represents the trace of an origin and thus, a personal identity, the proof of having existed and therefore the right to exist. History is that time when his mother was living, before him (Bruno 1987). And history implies the possibility of the dream of unity (Wiseman 1989). Photographs document existence in history, which are then transformed into memories of lives lived and lost. According to Michel Foucault, this documentation is imperative for perceiving temporality in terms of past and future (cited in Poster

1984). The photograph bears witness to the reality of its object, where “reality” is construed as presence (Wiseman 1989:143-147).

Photography superimposes reality and the past, the signifier and the referent (signified) (Moriarty 1991). Photography, according to Giuliana Bruno (1987), is designated the immense task of reasserting the referent, of re-appropriating the real and historical continuity. Can one not say that in Kentridge’s realistic drawings the historical referent is replaced by the drawing referent? Are Kentridge’s drawings not the same as photographs? The presence of Kentridge in a drawing “makes” him real. The presence of the thing certainly is not metaphoric, but real — the miners, the slave ships, the capitalists, are they not real? Kentridge’s series have captured a world of memories — his and others. Kentridge’s drawings are a world of simulations, a world in which distinctions and differences between realities and referents have been effaced. The real becomes not so much as what can be produced as “that which is already reproduced” (Jean Baudrillard cited in Smart 1993:122). Kentridge has eliminated the comparable distinction between imitation and reality. His drawings are not mere illusions of realities, but what Baudrillard calls “hyper-real” (cited in Smart 1993:122). The unreal has become real. Again, his characters are “more-real-than-real” (Baudrillard cited in Kellner 1989:68).

Another issue raised by Barthes’ concept of the *noeme* (“*that-has-been*”) of the photograph is the question of immortality. Immortality is unattainable — except in a photograph where the subject continues to “exist” — lost time is reclaimed and lost

memories are re-remembered. They are immortal in that they have been frozen in time. And so too are Kentridge's drawings — frozen in time, documenting history.

David Bathrick, with regard to both the absence and presence of an image, focuses specifically on “the epochal non-enunciation of the *Muselmann*” (2004:290). Survivors such as Jean Améry, Bruno Bettelheim, Primo Levi and Ruth Kluger (amongst others) refer to this spectre of a person. The *Muselmann* gets his/her name from the adapted German word for “Muslim” (association / reason unknown), and was the result of systematic, intentional torture and abuse by the SS through starving and working inmates to their proximal death, and through this very process turning them into submissive, compliant, wandering, spectral half dead beings (Bathrick 2004:291). Jean Améry described them thus: “[H]e was a staggering corpse, a bundle of physical functions in its last convulsions” (1980:9; cf. Bathrick 2004). This *Muselmann* has stubbornly remained on the periphery of descriptions and testimonies of the Holocaust. However Giorgio Agamben writes that it is “a striking fact that although all witnesses speak of him as a central experience, the *Muselmann* is barely named in the historical studies on the destruction of European Jews” (1999:52; cf. Bathrick 2004).

Through his own studies, Agamben has reported an “absence of visual representations” of this functional corpse. He refers to cinematic footage taken by the Allies when they liberated Bergen-Belson, describing what he sees as “living

people, a group of prisoners ... wandering on foot like ghosts” and has reported that this remains the sole evidence or visual representation of these spectres (1999:51).

For the author of this doctoral study, it begs the question why: why this absence of imagery of the *Muselmann*? Furthermore, does this absence suggest that there remains the question of how to portray these individuals and ultimately whether or not one should attempt to portray them? A discussion on this non-portrayal of the *Muselmann* follows below in an attempt to address these questions and engage with them, albeit briefly. This discussion is then related to Kentridge’s works. The *Muselmann* phenomenon is one that is looked at almost in disgust, and Primo Levi allocates their representation to the “gray zone” (1989:36-69). Bruno Bettelheim and other victims rather shockingly express their ambiguous emotions of shame, disappointment, anguish and loathing towards the *Muselmann* (1960). Bettelheim believes that these mixed emotions towards these “ghosts” are mere projection on the part of the survivors — their own torment and fury / rage at their existence, a reminder of “their own imminent systematic transformation into a nonhuman being” (Bettelheim 1960:156; cf. Bathrick 2004). Primo Levi extrapolates on this by stating that there was even an “institutionalized complicity with the SS among prisoners” who focused on their own survival, even going so far as to knock these ghosts down — for what was the purpose of yet another *Muselmann* dragging him/herself to work — they were an unnecessary burden (1996:88). Of the *Muselmann*, Levi further writes that all those “who finish in the gas chambers have

the same story, or more exactly, have no story; they followed the slope down to the bottom, like streams that run into the seas” (1996:90; cf. Bathrick 2004:293).

This is similar to those streams of unidentified workers found in Kentridge’s *Johannesburg, 2nd Greatest City after Paris*. They have a “ghostly”, “nonhuman” air about them (see *Figure 7.24* and *Figure 7.25*). The proletariat represented in his film are not subjects of pity, not deserving of empathy, but rather derision and disgust / revulsion (from Soho Eckstein’s point of view). Thus Soho Eckstein throws food scraps at them, rather than feeling sorry for them and giving them food parcels, or increasing their pay so they can afford to buy more food (see *Figure 7.26*: Eckstein and his overflowing table of food from which he hurls the food). Are they an embarrassment perhaps, because the assumption is that they are not workers, but rather slaves, in Soho Eckstein’s employment? Their poverty is a direct result of their working conditions and below subsistence earnings — for which Soho Eckstein is undoubtedly responsible. His actions completely dehumanise them. His throwing food leftovers at them is done with real anger and scorn, no sympathy whatsoever is evident. If he truly empathised with them he would no longer view them as his slaves to be exploited, but as individuals who work for him, deserving of better pay and better working conditions.



Figure 7.26 Drawing from *Johannesburg, 2nd Greatest City after Paris* (Godby 1992:unpaginated).



Figure 7.27 Drawing from *Johannesburg, 2nd Greatest City after Paris* (Godby 1992:unpaginated).



Figure 7.28 Drawing from *Johannesburg, 2nd Greatest City after Paris* (Cameron, Christov-Bakargiev and Coetzee 1999:52).

Is Kentridge's work a "tortured scream" (to paraphrase Adorno)? William Kentridge's films embody / offer what Robert Kolker (2002) calls a dialectical mimetic expression; an expression of atrocities that disturbs viewers, forcing one to scrutinise one's own values and beliefs rather than pandering to, or satisfying them (see *Figure 7.29* and *Figure 7.30*).

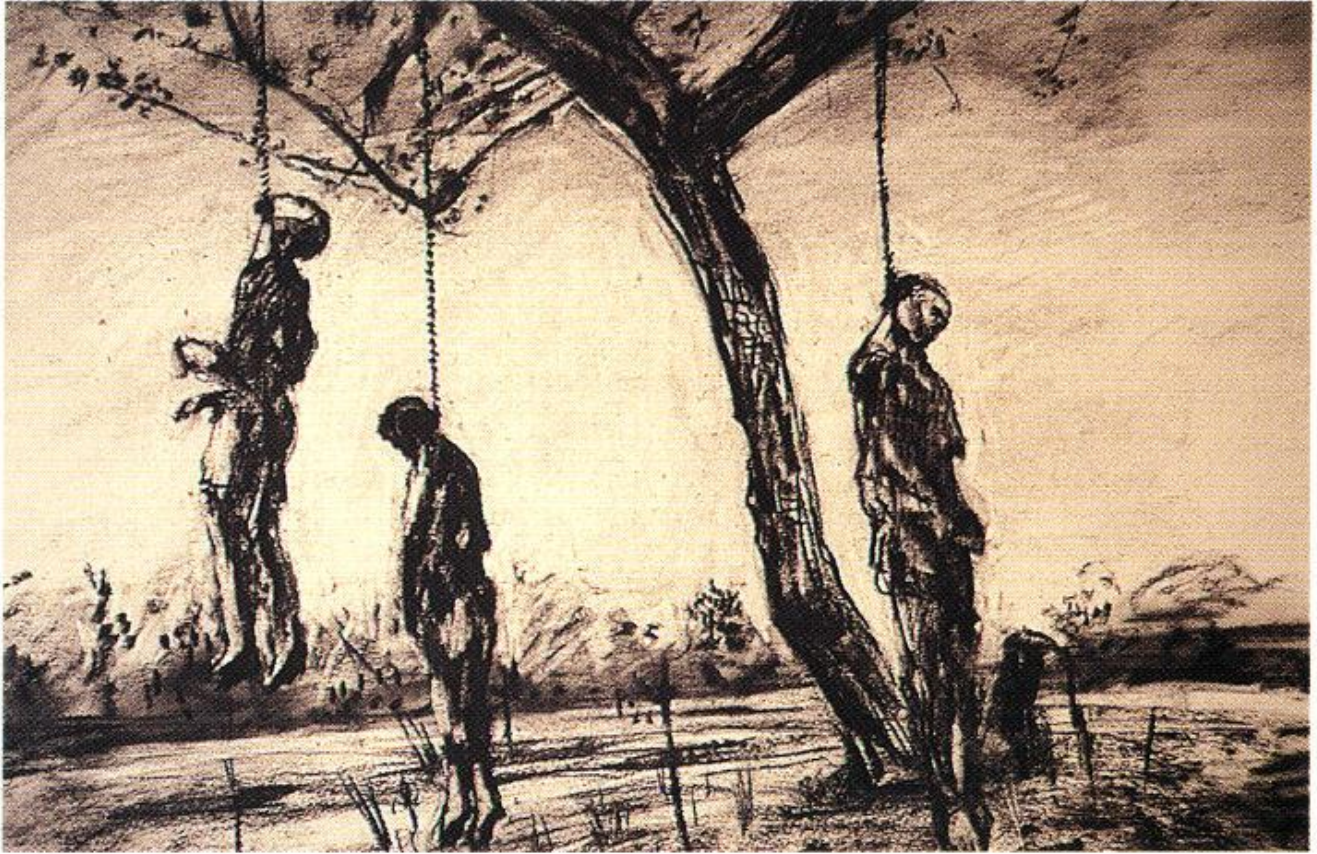


Figure 7.29 Drawing used in the animation for the play *Faustus in Africa!* (Cameron, Christov-Bakargiev and Coetzee 1999:21).

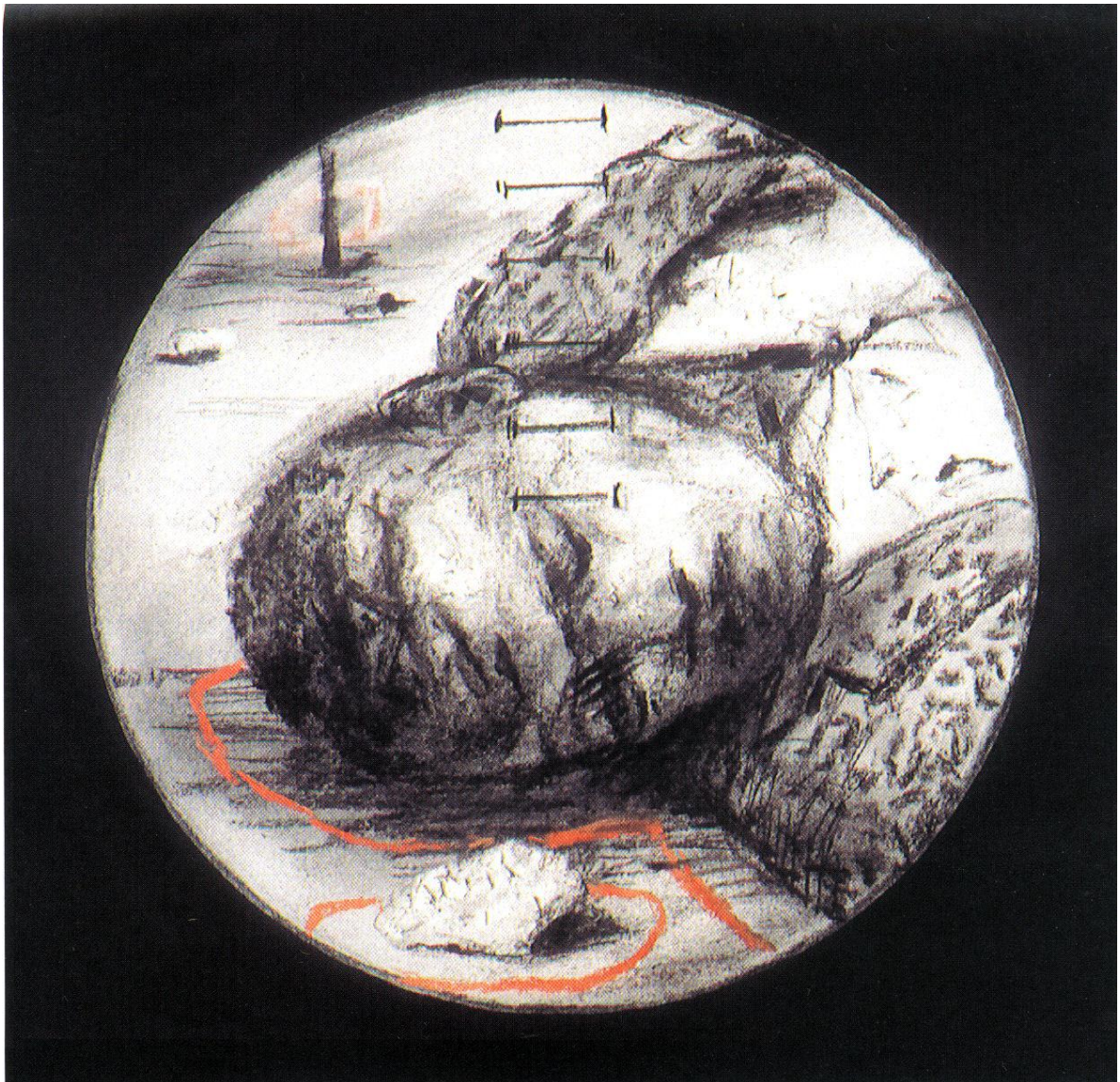


Figure 7.30 Drawing from *Felix in Exile* (Christov-Bakargiev 1998:95).

7.3 Conclusion

These mediums show the importance of such representations, or re-representations, in the role of remembering atrocities, and the significance of art in reaching audiences normally untouched by such occurrences. Having discussed

memory, representation and aesthetics, this study now turns its attention to

Chapter Eight: Memory, History, Identity, Time and Space.

CHAPTER EIGHT: MEMORY, HISTORY, IDENTITY, TIME AND SPACE

History is about the passage of time, albeit a highly particular and biased perspective. History is also the effect that time has on space - that is, the landscape. History changes landscapes, both mental and physical. It is time changing / eroding space. Therefore, put another way, history erodes / changes / reshapes time in terms of memory and identity. The landscape in question in this chapter is primarily the mental landscape. Yet William Kentridge's films are history recorded physically (his drawings can be seen as paper saturated landscapes — of the land and mind — which change with every erasure / stroke). However, due to their contents Kentridge's historical images can change one's perceptions and memories / associations of history and therefore by extension their place in spacetime. His films are a form of cathexis / abreaction (Freud 1991a / 1900). They are sedimental, palimpsests of recorded / imagined history(ies) / memory(ies). Images from Kentridge's own mind's eye as well as others' mental images — through association, empathy and identification — abound. Memory, history, identity, time and space are inextricably linked. Kentridge's films are pellucid psychical and physical topographies — real and phantasmagorical. Dziga Vertov, a documentary Russian / Soviet Formalist film maker called films a form of "creative geography" (cited in Joyce 1999:423; cf. Vertov 1973). This concept encapsulates a definition of Kentridge's films.

8.1 History as metafiction

Hayden White begins his chapter on history and the cinema, *The Modernist Event*, by quoting Walter Benjamin: “[h]istory does not break down into stories but into images” (cited in White 1996:17). White posits that cinematic images can represent “historical thinking” (1996:17-38; cf. Staiger 1996:39). He also suggests that (post)modernism introduces innovative and creative means to represent and examine what he calls “holocaustal” events: events such as the Rwandan and other genocides, wars, ethnic cleansing, and so forth (1996:20). He argues that in these innovative / creative representations of real / actual events, the meaning of the event and the event itself merge and result in a historical metafiction. These historical metafictions deal with events (such as the Holocaust / Shoah) that not only cannot be remembered, but cannot be forgotten, either. Using the film directed by Oliver Stone, *JFK*, for example, White refers to Stone’s inclusion of documentary footage mixed with that of re-enactments and possible scenarios — a blending of fact and fiction. (Kentridge’s other works, such as *Black Box / Chambre Noir* and *Ubu Tells the Truth* are also given a documentary-like emphasis with the inclusion of archival footage and the use of maps and found paper, such as actual ledger book paper which he has drawn on, and other factual pictorial matter: see *Figure 8.1 — 8.3*). According to White, *JFK* is an excellent example of a historical metafiction. Through extrapolation, so too are Kentridge’s films. However, the film *JFK* was slated by audiences and critics alike. Referring to an American critic who lambasted the film for that very reason (that is, his mixing of archival footage with that of recreated scenes), White quotes the critic as stating: “... by treating a historical event as if there were no limits on what could

legitimately be said about it ...” (1996:40). Yet that is exactly what White argues — there are no limits when remembering history.

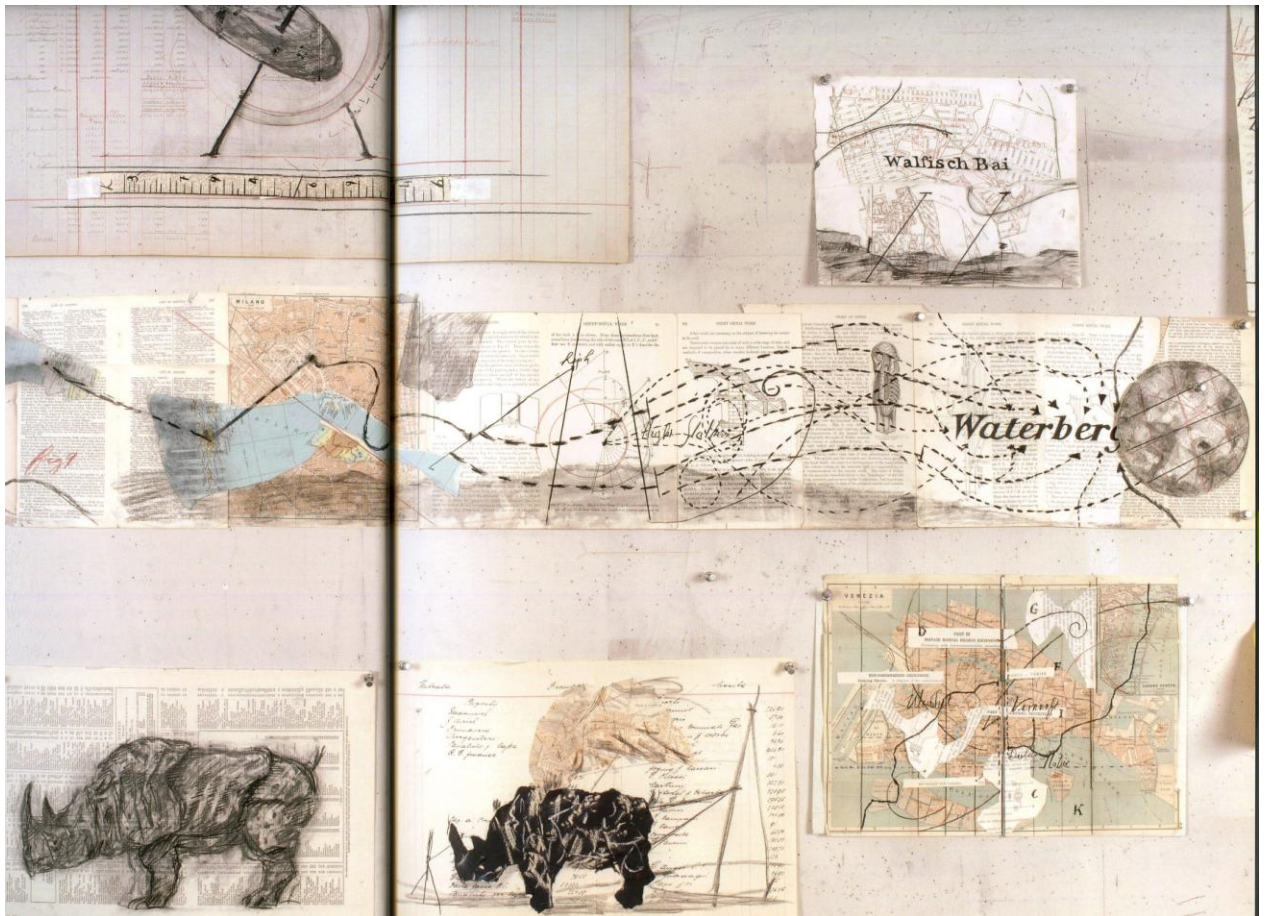


Figure 8.1 Drawing from *Black Box / Chambre Noir* (from *Flute* edited by Law-Viljoen 2007b:36-37).

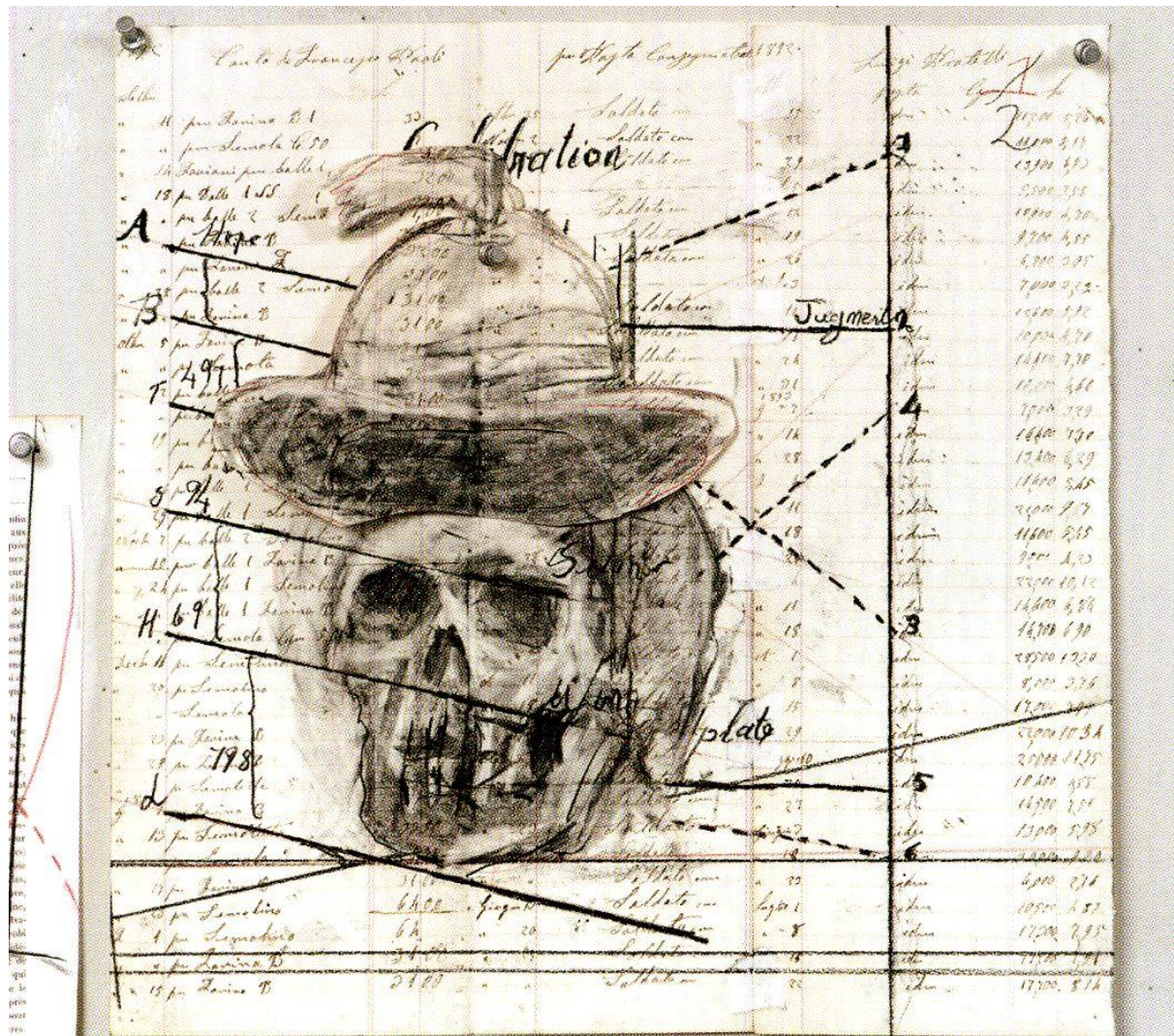


Figure 8.2 Drawing from *Black Box / Chambre Noir* (from *Flute* edited by Law-Viljoen 2007b:170).

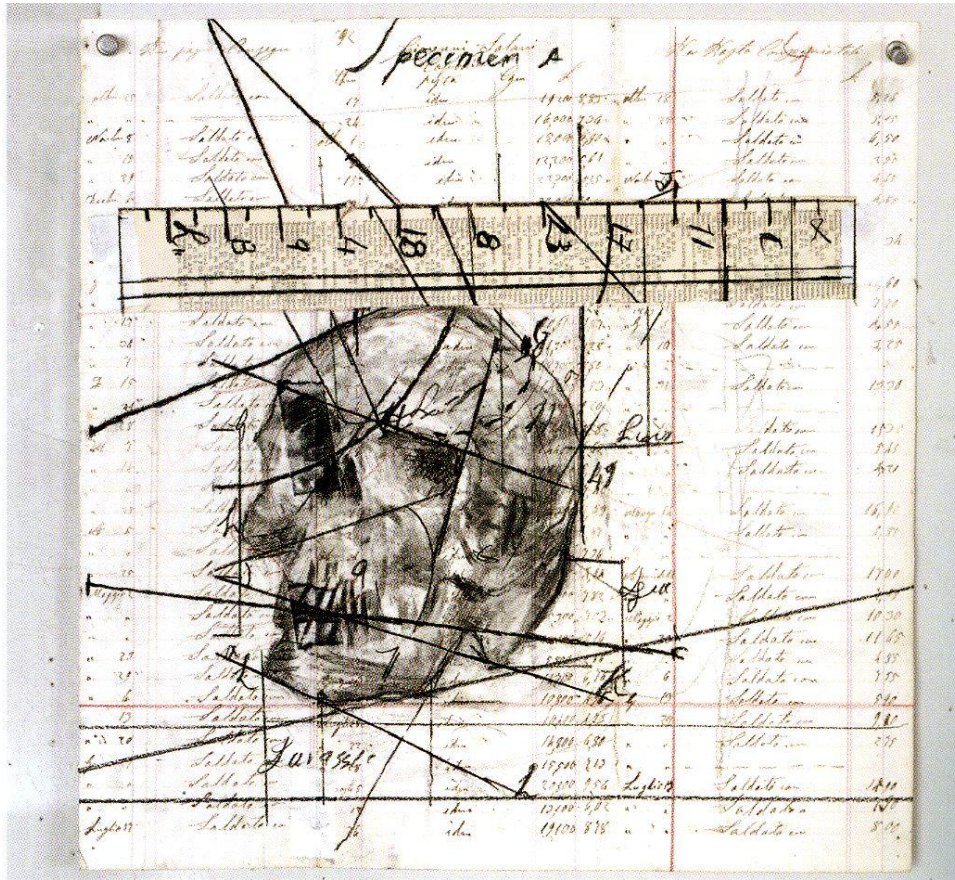


Figure 8.3 Drawing from *Black Box / Chambre Noir* (from *Flute* edited by Law-Viljoen 2007b:170).

Hayden White relates the recall of “holocaustal” events to psychoanalysis. He argues that these events “function in the consciousness of certain social groups exactly as infantile traumas are conceived to function in the psyche of neurotic individuals” (1996:20). By this White means, like personal traumas which cannot be easily forgotten by an individual, nor adequately remembered, collective traumas often have ambiguous meanings and are not easily contextualised. (This can be said of South Africa. There was no revolution; the TRC tried to reconcile the perpetrators and the victims by giving them a platform from which to confess and grieve — thereby enabling them to move forward, to enter a present reconciled

with their past, and in so doing create closure (cf. Dubow and Rosengarten 2004)). As a result of non-closure, communities are prevented from entering a present free from the debilitating effects of such collectively experienced traumas.

Events have had their outside phenomenological aspects joined to their inside probable meanings. This fusion results in the meaning of events and their actual occurrences becoming indistinguishable from one another. This is problematic because memories of such occurrences are “unstable, fluid, phantasmagoric” (White 1996:29). Hayden White then argues that “experiential history” of an event is impossible to conceive (1996:30-31). White refers to academic Eric Santner who states that telling a story of any holocaustal / traumatic event results in “narrative fetishism” (cited in White 1996:31¹; This is, according to Santner a “strategy of undoing, in fantasy, the need for mourning by stimulating a condition of intactness, typically by situating the site and origin of loss elsewhere” (cited in White 1996:31).

Janet Staiger, in her chapter entitled *Cinematic Shots: the Narration of Violence* (from the book *The Persistence of History. Cinema, Television and the Modern Event*, edited by Vivien Sobchack (1996)) quotes Jerome Bruner in stating that narrative constructs are a historical tradition of recounting stories in order to give mastery over the stories, yet ultimately these constructions simply result in “verisimilitude[s]” (cited in Staiger 1996:41). It is this so-called mastery that White

¹ Please also see: Dubow and Rosengarten 2004; and Friedländer 1992a / 1992b / 1993 / 2003a / 2003b / 2003c.

questions — because one cannot have mastery over one's memories. However, unorthodox / creative official historical representations are contested and dismissed outright.

For White then, it is the “anti-narrative non-stories” produced in cinematic and literary form that therefore provide a clear distinct break of modern history (“holocaustal” events) with the histories that have preceded it (1996). Frederic Jameson calls these artistic forms “psychopathologies” — anti-narratives that preclude closure, mix narrative forms, split them, reverse them and even exclude them (cited in White 1996:32). This de-fetishisation of events and the accounts of them serve to illustrate that to attempt to present history realistically downplays the threat of them recurring. This de-fetishisation also enables individuals and communities to mourn, which in turn enables healing. White therefore strongly argues that if individuals attempt to represent the un-representable in linear, conservative narratives, with a fixed beginning, middle and end, it results in a “fetishisation” of that event (1996:32, 40). In a way it sanitises the event. Such traditional, measured narratives about these “holocaustal” events are impossible of course. Such a narrative results in a surrogate tale, one that attempts to give an ordered and structured narrative / account of past events, when it is impossible to remember them so. Understanding this from a purely psychoanalytical perspective, this narrativisation / fetishisation prevents the mourning of the loss of the object (of a loved one, for instance; however Freud extended this to a loss of one's country or even home (Freud 2005; cf. Freud 1917 / 1957)). Hayden White concludes that it is only through anti-narrative non-stories of the cinematic and literary variety that

one can represent traumatic events. According to White, these anti-narrative non-stories refuse totalisation and therefore enable the act of mourning to occur (1996). White goes on to argue that attempting to represent events in traditional narrative constructs through individual agents prevents or delays the mourning process. He even argues that these artificially constructed narratives may result in the events being ignored altogether. He argues for an allegorical representation of traumatic events. He recognises the importance of cinema and other art forms for representing subjective versions of the past. In his analysis of Oliver Stone's film *JFK* (1991), White points out that the director, being a Vietnam veteran, presumably knows the difference between the events of the Vietnam War and the multitude of representations of it (cf. *Platoon* (1986), *Born on the 4th July* (1989), and *Heaven & Earth* (1993)). He believes that Stone acknowledges that certain events took place, but that in various representations of the war, there is little difference between the factual and fictional versions. He recounts Stone's views on "history" from an excerpt published in *Esquire* magazine:

What is history? Some people say it's a bunch of gossip made up by soldiers who passed it around a campfire. They say such and such happened. They create, they make it bigger, they make it better. I knew guys in combat who made up shit. I'm sure the cowboys did the same. The nature of human beings is that they exaggerate. So, what is history? Who the fuck knows? (cited in White 1996:37).

Although White's critique of *JFK* is not relevant here in its entirety, and his inclusion of Stone's quote is by all accounts colloquial, it does raise a significant point to illustrate White's ideas of "history". John F. Kennedy's assassination has been told and re-told, and re-presented so many times, the film is simply one more telling of a story of the president's murder. This story is a response to a collective trauma

that does not yet have closure and cannot be forgotten, yet at the same time cannot be remembered as “*merely* an event in the past” (White 1996:37). And as White argues, referring to *JFK*, films show history as it is thought. Kentridge’s films also show what the subject is “thinking” about: his and others’ history(ies) / memory(ies).

8.2 Identity

William Kentridge’s *oeuvre* explores in part the idea of a South African identity through the ontological questions of what it means to have lived through apartheid and what it means to live as a South African in the “new South Africa”. It also raises the question of an “artistic identity”: what does it mean to create aesthetic and cultural works of art in the aftermath of a brutal regime? Kentridge’s filmic works are always situated within the present — a present that is continually shaped by his cultural heritage. Kentridge’s *oeuvre* attempts to mediate between a traumatic history (apartheid) and a post-history (as of 2009, post post-apartheid) — histories some individuals will never know — to which he bears witness and allows admittance. Author Lisa Saltzman describes the artistic work of Anselm Kiefer (a second-generation German born in 1945) thus: “[it] positions itself in that liminal space between impossibility and possibility, deferral and realization, repression and acknowledgement” (2000:2).

This is also an apt description of Kentridge’s works. Kentridge’s art might engage in ethical and philosophical questions, but it also positions the subject within a historical trauma: apartheid. History creates psychological trauma, which

Kentridge visualises and then draws, which in turn intimates a joining of the psychological, the social, cultural, political and historical being represented in his works. His works portray and culminate in what Frederic Jameson described as follows: “history is what hurts” (1981:102). South African identity is very fragile. The current national boundaries are a result of the residue of the Anglo-Boer War, now usually referred to as the South African War, the origins of which lie in the discovery of gold and the creation of Johannesburg. In a sense, therefore, Johannesburg *is* South Africa, but it is also not South Africa in that it is quite different from the rest of the country. There are many disparate identities in the country, constantly formed and re-formed through geography, race, class, language and religion. For white English-speaking South Africans, due to their attachment to the West, there is particularly little sense of national identity — only a very local sense. For instance, although a generalisation, it might be easier to state “I am a Johannesburger” than to say “I am a South African”. In contrast to this assumption, there is Kentridge’s comment: “London is a suburb of Johannesburg” (Kentridge cited in Godby 1992: unpaginated). Johannesburg can be seen as the metropole and London as the outpost — in other words, the conflicts around race and colonialism one experiences in South Africa are explicit and central here, whereas in London the same issues point to the historical forces beyond that city’s narrow confines. In other words, England in some way takes its definition from South Africa. Does it not yet seem then, that the very local identity derived from belonging to a particular city does not make one more South African, but less so?

In the light of the above, Kentridge's two comments: "Europe weighs heavily on us" and "I have been unable to escape Johannesburg" (Kentridge cited in Godby 1992: unpaginated) are noteworthy. They convey a sense of profound belonging to Johannesburg, but with that added awareness of Western cultural identity. Felix Teitlebaum is first introduced to the audience in *Johannesburg, 2nd Greatest City after Paris*, next to the caption "Captive of the City", which further reiterates his statement, that he has been unable to leave Johannesburg. Interestingly, Felix is also introduced to the viewer naked — a state he adheres to until he becomes one with Soho in *History of the Main Complaint*. His nakedness can mean many things: his antithesis to Soho who is always dressed in a corporate pin striped suit; his opposition to materialism; a purity; his transparency; his innocence; his birth or re-birth; his identification with the naked miners found in *Mine*.

Another recurring theme of Kentridge's films is that of desire, which is directly linked to that of identity. Desire is characterised by its negativity: desire represents a lack which underlies the dialectical relation of the individual's actions to the world. For Georg Hegel, the relationship of consciousness to the self is established by a negating desire — not the desire for a thing — but the desire for another's desire and recognition (cited in Pefanis 1991). Alexandre Kojève sums it up as follows: "Man is desire directed towards another Desire — that is desire for recognition" (cited in Pefanis 1991:12). Thus, there is a human need for others. Individuals crave acknowledgment and recognition and acceptance from others. Humans, however, in Kentridge's films are alienated from each other through capitalism and imperialism and class and race. Even Felix Teitlebaum is completely alone in

Sobriety, Obesity & Growing Old, after Mrs. Eckstein breaks off her affair with him and returns to Soho Eckstein. Something that William Kentridge and others, as humans, struggle with on a daily basis — to be whole, and not to be fragmented or to live fragmented lives — which in modern society and culture is an extremely difficult thing to do. Consider the fragmented lives of mine workers — leaving their wives and children “at home”, while they stay in hostels / dormitories and live completely different lives than they would if they were still at home — often resorting to drinking, prostitution and even homosexuality. Along with the individual’s need for recognition is the longing for others and their loneliness. There are two examples of this from *Sobriety, Obesity & Growing Old*. The first is Soho Eckstein standing in an empty landscape with only his cat for company, with the caption “Her absence filled the world”. He is obviously mourning the loss of his wife, who is having an affair with Felix Teitlebaum. Then when Mrs. Eckstein returns to her husband, there is an image of Felix Teitlebaum, completely alone with only his gramophones for company (see *Figure 8.4*).



Figure 8.4 Drawing from *Sobriety, Obesity & Growing Old* (Godby 1992:unpaginated).

Another view of desire is that of the narcissistic fascination with doubling. Kentridge's films contain many images involving reflections and mirrors, most especially in *Felix in Exile*; *Stereoscope* and *History of the Main Complaint*. In *Felix in Exile* Kentridge repeatedly looks into a mirror, initially seeing himself, peering back at himself, but after a few shots he sees an unnamed black woman reflected back at him (referred to by Kentridge as "Nandi", in Christov-Bakargiev 1998:12; see *Figure 8.5*). In *History of the Main Complaint*, Soho/Felix looks at his

rear-view mirror again and again. Sometimes it is a close-up of his eyes only, and at other times images of apartheid South Africa go by — the images / memories that came to be known and validated through the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Also concerned with the issue of narcissistic doubling is the fact that Kentridge uses his own image as the image for Soho/Felix.

For the author of this dissertation, William Kentridge creates character(s) who are critically contemplative, riddled with anxiety and reluctantly reflective: they are burdened with the legacy of history / historical trauma. Nicola King writes in her book entitled *Memory, Narrative, Identity: Remembering the Self* that: “the “I” of the present is constructed out of, but also continues to rewrite, the “I” of the past” (2000:40). Using narrative as a means of linking an individual’s present with her/his past allows for a continuous identity, one that is constantly being reconstructed / recreated. Also, according to King, “the construction of the self is a provisional and continuous process” (2000:40). South Africa’s TRC allows the recounting of different versions of “history” in that it gives significance to “memory” as “history” — it allows for the participants to recount their experiences under the brutal apartheid regime without singling out any one testimony as more significant than another. They *all* have authority.



Figure 8.5 Drawing from *Felix in Exile* (Cameron, Christov-Bakargiev and Coetzee 1999:97).

David William Cohen wrote in his book, *The Combing of History*, “Remembering and forgetting are not opposed and reciprocal programs; they are deeply intertwined” (1994:xxiv). Silke Horstkotte cites recent research that positions cultural / collective / social memory as dynamic and transformative. This position is premised on Michael Halbwachs’ view that it is the individual who remembers although these memories are presupposed by a “social framework” (1950 / 1980:193). Jonathan Crewe writes that Halbwachs “postulate of collective memory made individual memory a function of social memory, not an isolated repository of personal experience” (1999:75). Memory and forgetting should be perceived as having commonalities with each other and overlapping each other rather than being oppositional.

German Expressionists and Russian / Soviet Formalists have placed film as an artistic medium that presents history as incredibly dramatic articulation and as vivid reflection. Siegfried Kracauer wrote pre-emptively of the “return of history as film” (cited in Kaes 1989: title page). He also wrote, in his book titled *Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality* (1960), that the film screen is in fact a technological descendant of “Athena’s polished shield”: herewith the paragraph quoted in its entirety:

We have learned in school the story of the Gorgon Medusa whose face, with its huge teeth and protruding tongue, was so horrible that the sheer sight of it turned men and beasts into stone. When Athena instigated to Perseus to slay the monster, she therefore warned him never to look at the face itself but only at its mirror reflection in the polished shield she had given him. Following her advice, Perseus cut off Medusa’s head with a sickle, which Hermes had contributed to his equipment. The moral of the myth is, of course, that we do not, and cannot, see actual horrors because they paralyze us with blinding fear; and that we shall know what they look like

only by watching images of them which reproduce their true appearance. These images have nothing in common with the artist's imaginative rendering of an unseen dread but are in the nature of mirror reflections. Now of all the existing media the cinema alone holds up a mirror to nature. Hence our dependence on it for the reflection of happenings which would petrify us were we to encounter them in real life. The film screen is Athena's polished shield (1960:305).

This shield or cinematic screen reflects the traumatic history of apartheid / genocide / atrocities, if only to be viewed indirectly / obliquely, that is, in this case through the aesthetics of Kentridge's works. Further to this analogy is the rest of Perseus' tale, told by Jane Taylor in her article *Spherical and Without Exits. Thoughts on William Kentridge's anamorphic film WHAT WILL COME (HAS ALREADY COME)* (2008). While this work of art is peripheral to this thesis, Taylor does provide further insight into the identity of William Kentridge. The myth is retold here in brief. Perseus was born to Danaë, daughter of Acrisius, King of Argos. Devastated at having a daughter, the King of Argos consulted the oracle at Delphi. Although Danaë was childless at the time of this consultation, Acrisius was forewarned that he would meet his death at the hand of his daughter's son. In order to keep Danaë childless he locked her away. Clever Zeus however impregnated her after visiting her in the form of a shower of gold. Their son was called Perseus. Remembering the oracle's prophecy he locked mother and child in a wooden chest and threw them into the sea. They washed ashore and Perseus grew to manhood. Simultaneously Acrisius was banished into exile by his brother Proetus. After beheading Medusa, Perseus attended the games in Larissa, and while throwing the discus, it veered off course and killed Acrisius who was sitting in the audience (Ov. Meta. 5. 1 – 235; 4. 792 – 802: translated by Morford &

Lenardon 1977). Hence the title of Kentridge's work *WHAT WILL COME (HAS ALREADY COME)*. Kentridge has for many years been enthralled by the myth of Medusa's head (and decapitated heads in general; see *Figures 8.7 — 8.14*). He has created an anamorphic print of Medusa's decapitated head which is visible and seen in perspective as reflected in a mirrored cylinder (Taylor 2008:4: see *Figure 8.6*).

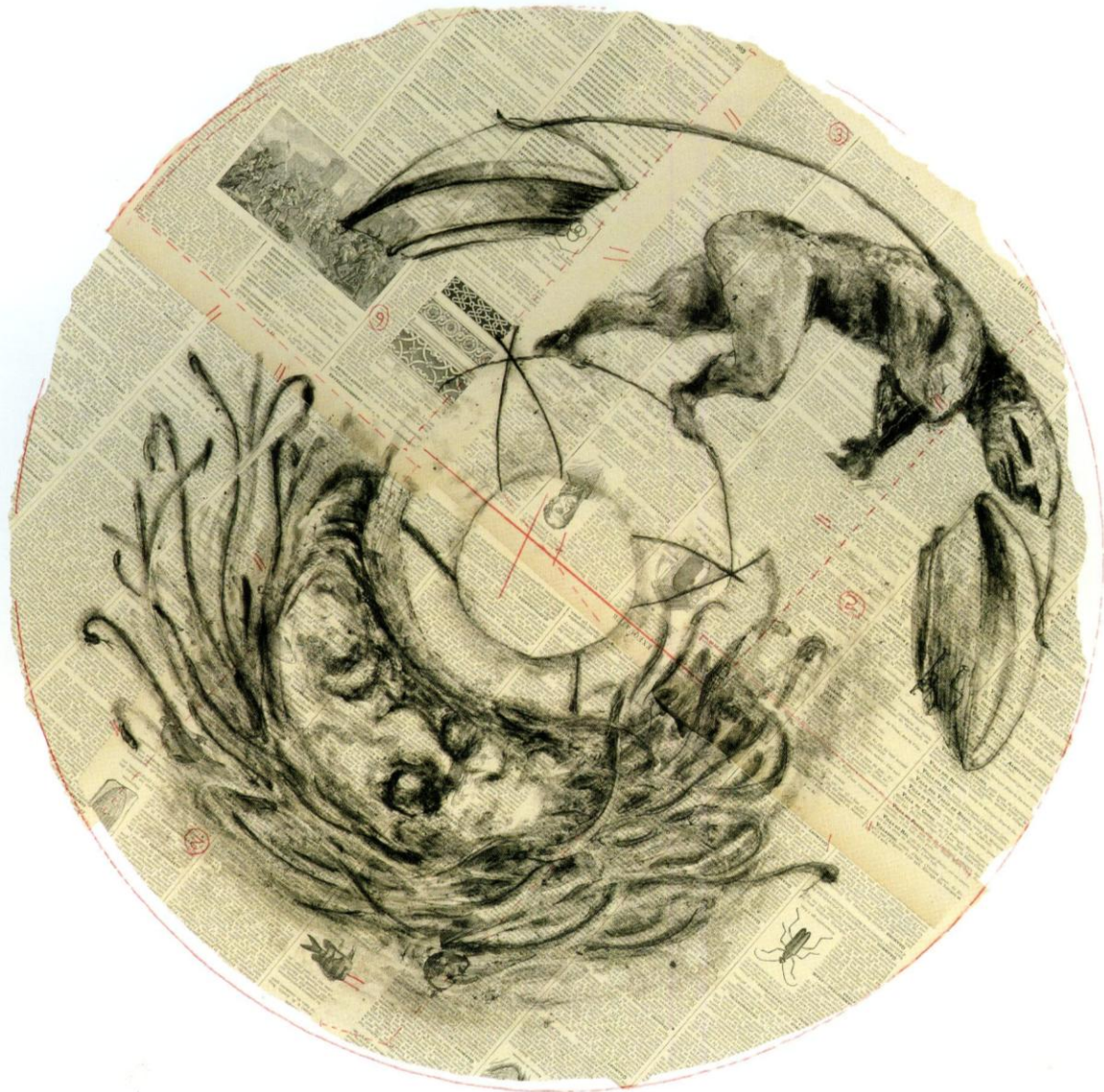


Figure 8.6 *Medusa* (2001) William Kentridge, three-run lithograph printed over *chine collé* of spreads from *Le Nouveau Larousse Illustré Encyclopaedia* (1906), on BFK Rives White paper, flat image is reflected in a mirror-finish steel cylinder placed at its centre (not shown) (Stewart 2006:116).

This is a very clever play with the myth obviously in mind. This cylindrical mirrored image is metaphorically important to Kentridge's works, including his films. Referring to the circular narrative structure of his films, Taylor points out that his transmogrified images have an internal / inherent logic in them (2008). Due to the layered nature of his drawing technique, the absurd images of a cat turning into a gas mask appear as a natural occurrence, fluid. As Taylor puts it, the "relationship has become a necessary one" (2008:4). Predictability is impossible. Also of significance to the circular narrative structure of Kentridge's films is his statement that his films reveal his subjectivity to the audience. As he states, they are "a kind of self-portraiture" (cited in Taylor 2008:4; cf. Breidbach 2006:68)².

² Something very intriguing to note, during his interviews with Angela Breidbach, Kentridge "doodles" whilst talking — an almost unconscious act. Of significance then is the first page of her book. In Kentridge's handwriting amongst drawings that reference his past works is the statement in capital letters "I DO NOT HAVE THE RIGHT TO BE AN ARTIST" (2006:unpaginated). As author of this thesis on Kentridge, considering his talent as an artist, it seems a curious statement for him to write; and further suggest that these words are an allusion to his insecurity as an artist.



Figure 8.7 Drawing from the *History of the Main Complaint* (Cameron, Christov-Bakargiev and Coetzee 1999:92).

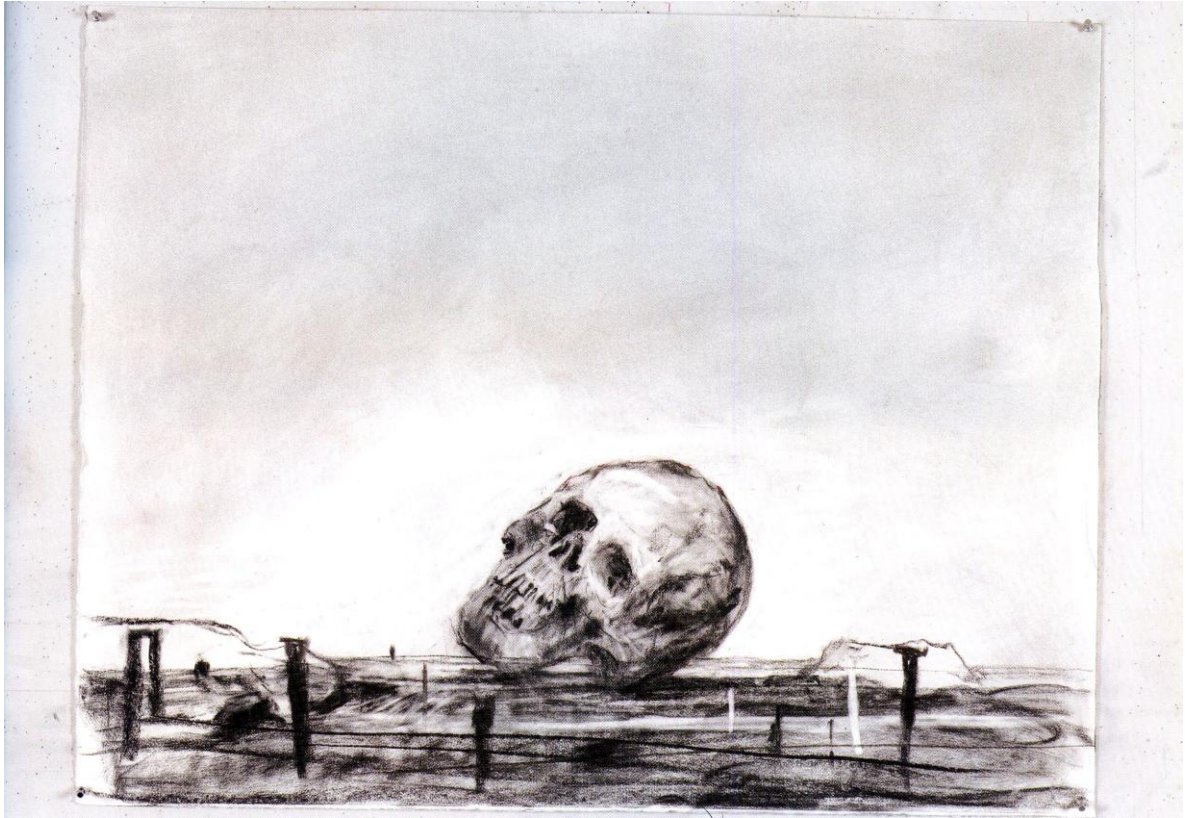


Figure 8.8 Drawing from *Black Box / Chambre Noir* (Flute edited by Law-Viljoen 2007b:159).



Figure 8.9 Photograph of theatre production *Black Box / Chambre Noir* (Flute edited by Law-Viljoen 2007b:172).



Figure 8.10 Drawing from *Black Box / Chambre Noir* (Flute edited by Law-Viljoen 2007b:173).

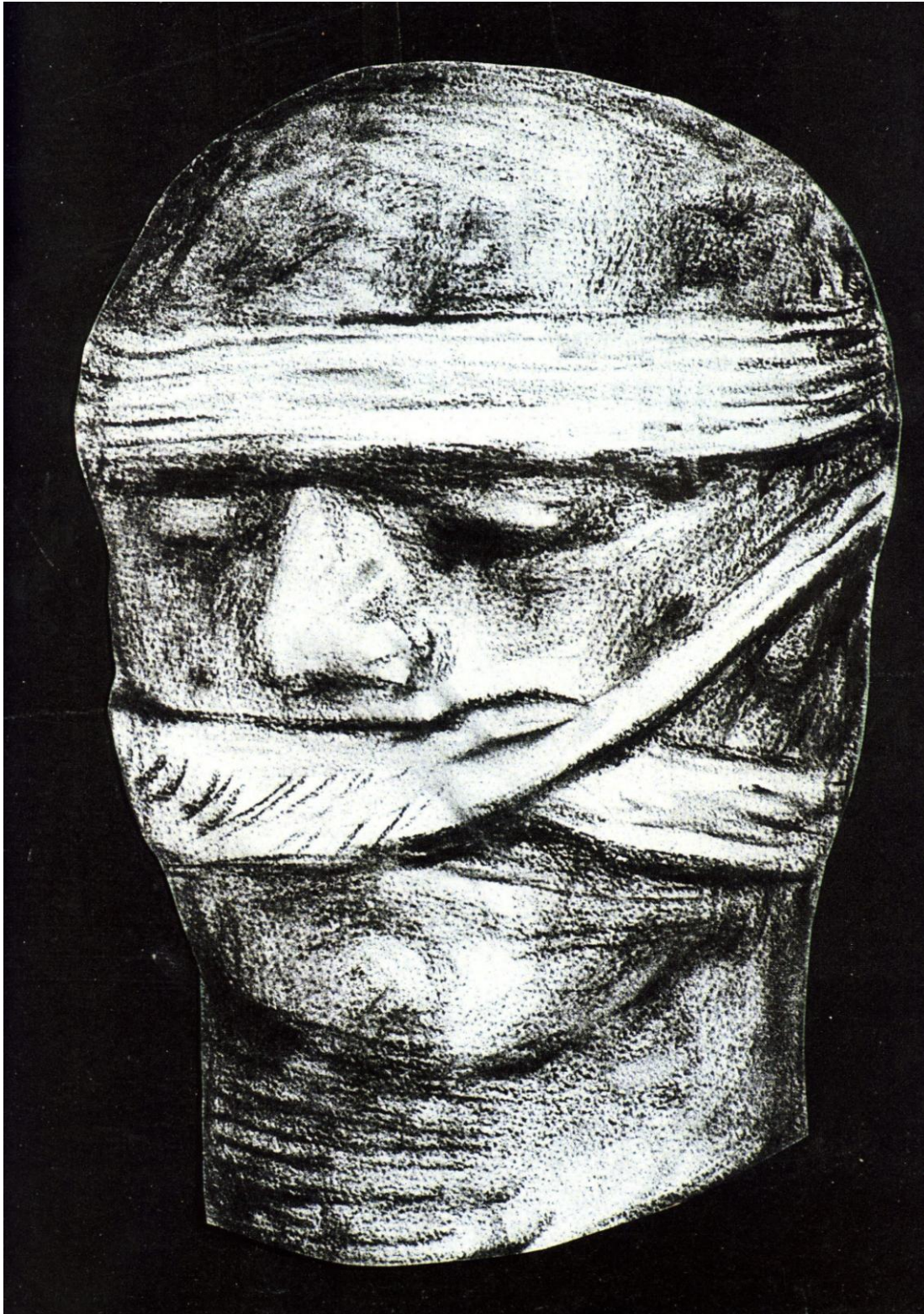


Figure 8.11 Fragment of drawing from *Il Ritorno d'Ulisse* (1998) William Kentridge, charcoal on paper (Christov-Bakargiev 1998:142).

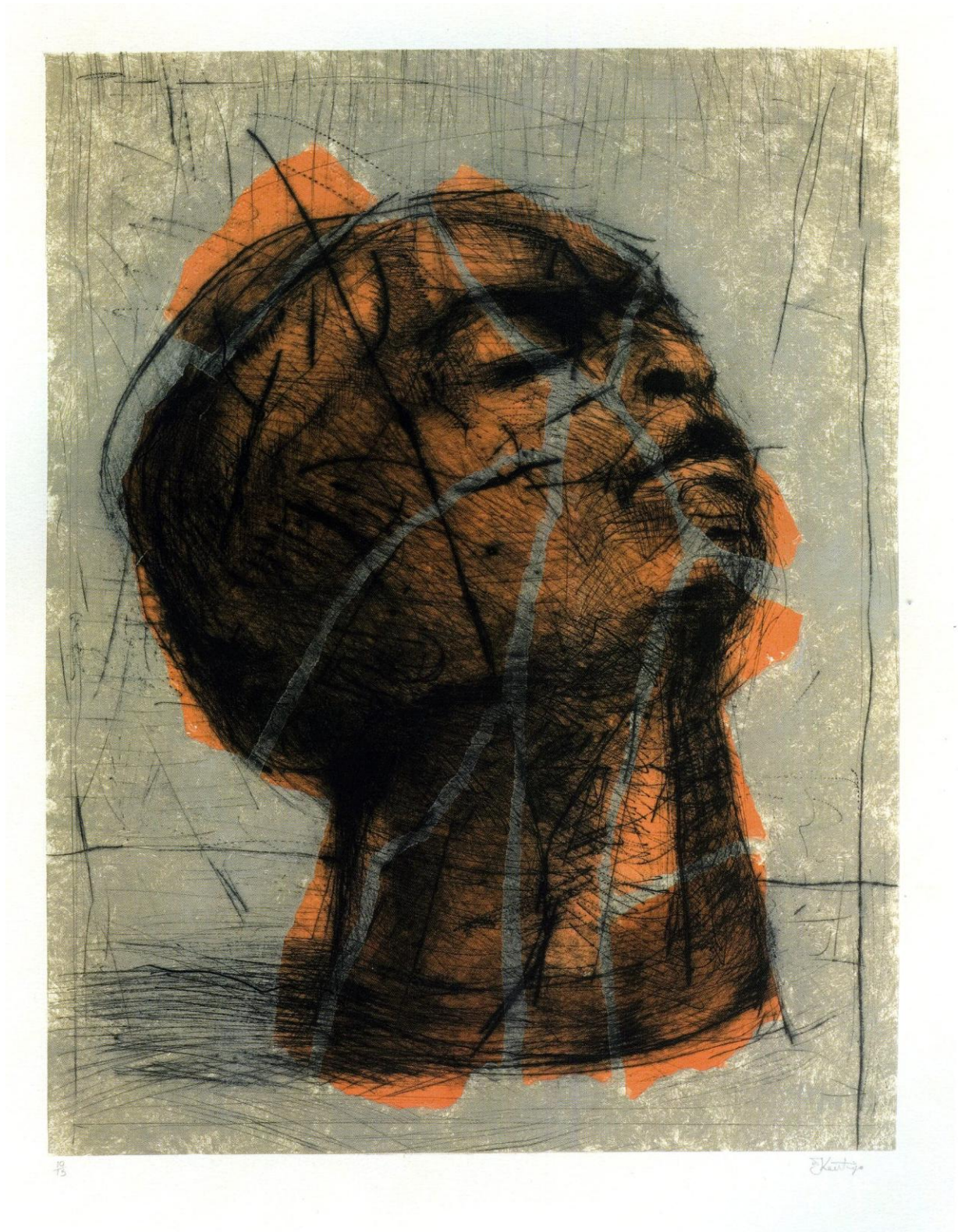


Figure 8.13 *Head* (1993) William Kentridge, drypoint, from 1 copper plate and two hand painted templates on *Vélin d'Arches Blanc* 300 gsm paper (Stewart 2006:46).

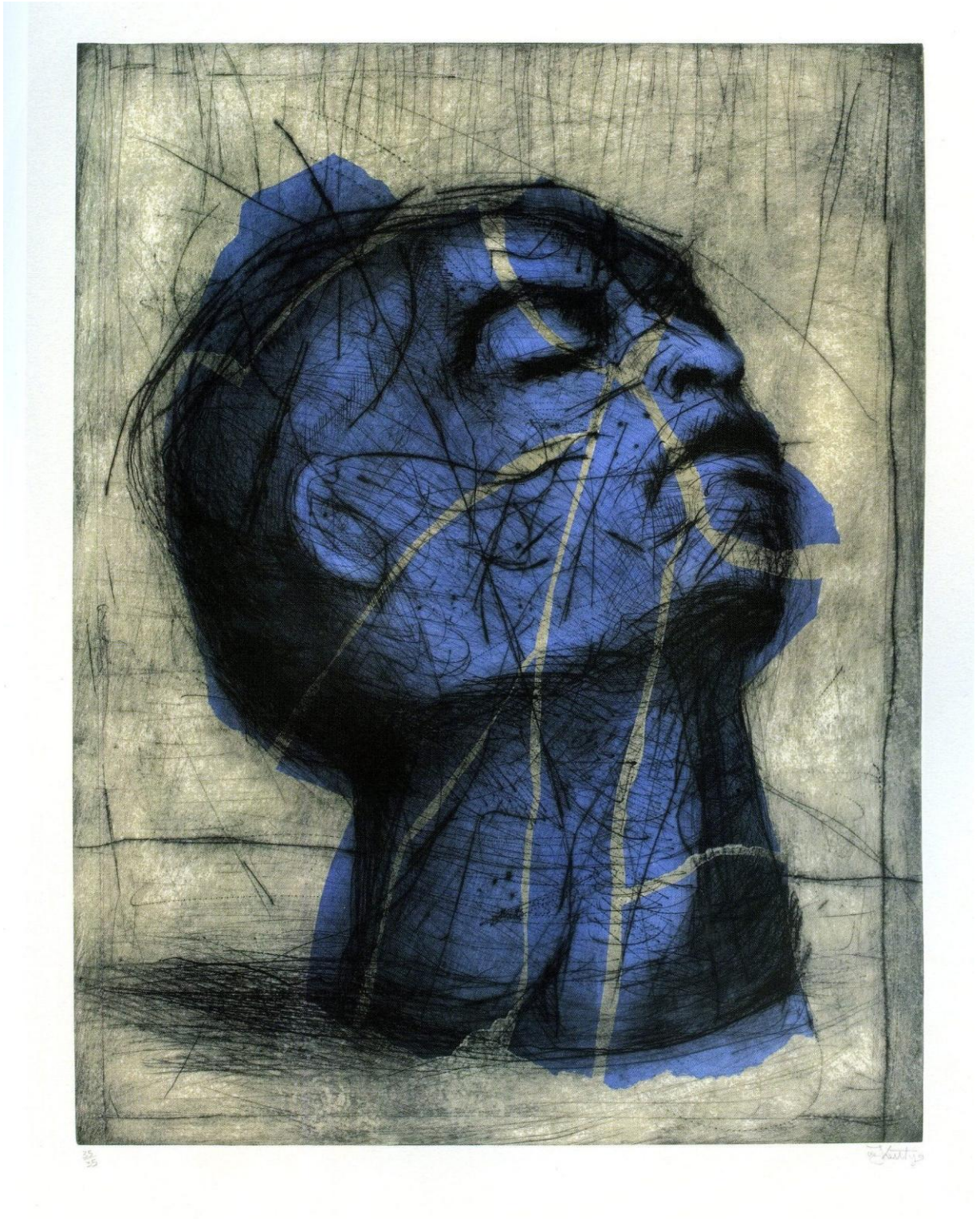


Figure 8.14 *Blue Head* (1993—1998) William Kentridge, drypoint, from 1 copper plate and two hand painted templates on *Vélin d'Arches Blanc* 300 gsm paper (Stewart 2006:47).

Kentridge has also used his films in part as self-definition by confronting his historical past. Kentridge implies that he and by extension his audience, need to confront and acknowledge a past that has been repressed and enshrined in a conspiracy of silence since childhood. Kentridge's works serve to situate the past unavoidably in the present. He acknowledges that he is an heir to a legacy of "historical trauma" (Saltzman 2000:16). Kentridge's works confront the past aesthetically with a tacit acknowledgment that history, including history after apartheid / genocide / Auschwitz, can only be understood through the realisation of its "very inaccessibility of its original occurrence and experience" (Saltzman 2000:16). His works are an "artistic exploration of the collected histories, memories" of South Africa's past and present (Saltzman 2000:39). Kentridge's works bear witness and represent the voiceless. According to Theodor W. Adorno

the abundance of real suffering tolerates no forgetting ... [it] demands the continued existence of art [even as] it prohibits. It is now virtually in art alone that suffering can still find its own voice, consolation, without immediately being betrayed by it (1977:188).

Kentridge's own embodied subjectivity is unique in that it portrays perpetrator (Soho Eckstein) and victim / proletariat (Felix Teitlebaum). His chronological progression of films seems an attempt to negotiate his own legacy and identity in relation to history. Therefore Kentridge combines the characters of Soho Eckstein and Felix Teitlebaum in his later films in the *Drawings for Projection* series.

Kentridge's *oeuvre*, from its earliest incarnations, has premised and aesthetically portrayed and actualised the traces of historical wounding. The term "trauma" or "wound" originally referred to a direct physical injury inflicted upon an individual(s),

but as discussed in *Chapter Five* of this study, extended to include the wounding of the mind / psyche / unconscious; fore mostly posited by Sigmund Freud. There is a duality to this term which is manifested in Kentridge's works. As discussed previously, his charcoal drawings leave a trace of charcoal behind on the paper — which could be viewed as a scarification, a physical wound of the “trauma” he has drawn (traumatic themes / topics). However, his work is also psychically situated within that of apartheid, whose legacy is that of the mentally traumatised (post-traumatic stress syndrome). While the physical wounds of those suffering under apartheid may well have healed, leaving behind traces of disfigurement; the psychic wounds on the other hand may never heal, leaving the past in the immediate present. So too are Kentridge's works, they are of the past but as they are currently viewed / screened they are also in a perpetual present. This is yet another example of Kentridge's works being seen as wounds — both physical and psychical.

Kentridge's works can be seen as psychoanalytical (a point that has been raised previously). His works dig into the minds of the collective, physically with layer upon layer of charcoal drawings — each layer revealing more (psychical and physical) meaning / sediments. They enact what Lisa Saltzman termed “the melancholy impulses of repetition, entombment, burial, and repression” (2000:89). However, they also work as a psychoanalyst would — not only revealing repressed memories but facilitating the recovery of repressed memories. His *oeuvre* is one of excavation of the collective / individual memories in history. This excavation / recovery ultimately lead to healing. Of course, Kentridge's works are more

complicated than that. It can be argued that his works do not reveal collective memories, but bury them — erasing them, drawing over each drawing (physically and metaphorically). His works are therefore dialectical — at once remembering and forgetting, recovering and burying. His repetitions (of themes and drawings) imply an unobtainable resolution, a perpetual deferral — they offer no closure. They are works of healing and mourning (cf. Dubow and Rosengarten 2004; White 1996). Dziga Vertov, a Russian / Soviet Formalist film maker, defined the term “Kino-Eye” or cinematic eye (1973:79). This is what the eye does not see, similar to that of an X-Ray eye (discovered after watching films in slow motion and realising that in the process of film making, there is much that is on celluloid that the eye does not consciously see — evident in slow motion and apparent now with DVD where you can play a film shot-by-shot) (1973:79; see *Figure 8.15*). Sergei Eisenstein said that he did not believe in the “Kino-Eye”, but rather in the “Kino-Fist” — images hurled at the audience (cited in Kolker 2002:50). Eisenstein also wanted to show the discontinuity of time. He did not want to show linear time, but emotional time — a time of suspense and thought. He wanted images to represent the conflict of history itself — a

form of dialectical materialism, that philosophy of history which sees events and ideas churning in conflict with each other, negating one another, creating new syntheses, constructing the new out of conflicting elements of the old (Kolker 2002:51).



Figure 8.15 Still photograph from film *Ubu tells the Truth* (Alemani 2006:53).

Kentridge's films are examples of what Sergei Eisenstein tried to capture on celluloid. Michael Fried writes of Picasso's *Guernica* in his book *Three American Painters: Kenneth Noland, Jules Olitski, Frank Stella*:

it is a conviction matured out of painful experience, individual and collective — that only an art of constant formal self-criticism can bear or embody or communicate more than trivial meaning (1965:25).

While obviously avoiding artistic comparisons between Picasso and Kentridge, the quote essentially applies to Kentridge's films too. And as Ari Sitas writes of William Kentridge:

The surreal, after all, is an apt metaphor for the existential situation of a white artist in Johannesburg who chooses to venture across the boundaries of privilege, class, and race: from the violence of the streets to tea in the afternoon with an aging relative, from Soweto to Houghton, from the ironies of the communal Junction Avenue Theatre Company to the elite galleries of Johannesburg, from the oppressive to the sublime, compressed in a day, a week, a lifetime (2001:63).

Fascinatingly, in support of artistic re-creations / representations of atrocities, Slavoj Žižek comments in his book *For They Know Not What They Do: Enjoyment as a Political Factor*:

[T]he point is *not* to remember the past trauma as exactly as possible: such 'documentation' is a priori false, it transforms the trauma into a neutral, objective fact, whereas the essence of the trauma is precisely that it is too horrible to be remembered, to be integrated into our symbolic universe. All we have to do is to mark repeatedly the trauma as such, in its very 'impossibility,' in its nonintegrated horror ... (1991:273).

8.3 Sigmund Freud's *A Note upon the Mystic Writing Pad* (1899a)

Multiple temporal points are fundamental to the development of the films, just as this temporality is entrenched within their materiality — Kentridge's images are made up of reversals, angularities and layers — these in turn render different meanings and readings. His films, by the very nature of their making, layers upon layers of drawings, conjure up the idea of the palimpsest / quite literally are palimpsests³. His sedimental drawings are drawn, erased, re-drawn, and re-interpreted — residues of charcoal adhering to giant sheets of white paper. Even Kentridge's studio in Houghton is a space of sedimentation and accumulation of memorial fragments — stills from his past films, cameras, photographs, paper cut-outs, prints, works in progress (see *Figure 8.16*).

³ Etymologically derived from the combination of the following two Greek words: *palin* meaning again, and *psaein* meaning to rub smooth (Chambers Concise Dictionary 2004:859).



Figure 8.16 A photograph of William Kentridge's art studio, with images of drawings for his film *Stereoscope* on the wall (Cameron, Christov-Bakargiev and Coetzee 1999:144).

For Rosalind Krauss Kentridge's films are "the emblematic form of the temporal and as such it is the abstraction of narrative, of history, of biography" (2000:24; cf. Christov-Bakargiev 1998; McIlleron 2003). Sigmund Freud in his writings on

psychoanalysis develops a similar concept to that of the palimpsest, that of *A Note upon the Mystic Writing Pad* (introduced in *Chapter Six*) (1899a). This is based on the original idea of parchment or papyrus and the use of a stylus which allows for the writing of messages. This is usually followed by the rubbing out of the present writing to make way for new words to be written. But just as the palimpsest implies residues so too does this “mystical writing pad”. Despite constant erasures, impressions of previous words / drawings are eternally imprinted / left behind. Freud writes that “the Pad provides not only a receptive surface that can be used over and over again, like a slate, but also permanent traces of what has been written, like an ordinary writing pad” are left behind (1899a:432).

Freud uses this as a blueprint to describe the machinations of the unconscious mind — memories of experiences past are indelibly imprinted in an individual’s mind. These memories of a subject’s history(ies) past are buried deep within, erased but not completely effaced. It is the analysand that merges these traces / histories past with that of one’s history’s present.

Jacques Derrida posits that it is in this metaphor of writing that Freud discovers the spatio-temporal foundation of consciousness. Freud claims that the writing on the ‘mystic writing pad’ “vanishes every time the close contact is broken between the paper which receives the stimulus and the wax slab which preserves the impression” of the stylus (cited in Meisel 1981:179; cf. McIlleron 2003). These pauses between suspension and writing, between erasure and imprint are applied by Freud to the understanding of the psyche as containing a dis-continuist notion of

time. This relates directly to Freud's concept of the "perceptual apparatus and consciousness" (*Pcpt.-Cs*) – a belief that positions consciousness as "dependent on periodic non-excitability" (1899a:433; cf. Freud 1984; McIlleron 2003:9). There is a fast mental image recurring at intervals from within the psyche destined outwards to the exterior. Sigmund Freud claimed that consciousness was inherent in these intermittent, erratic thought processes (1984:433). As such, Freud extended the claim of *Pcpt.-Cs*, arriving at the belief that this cathexis apparatus was the origin of one's concept of time. Temporality therefore consists of spacing or discontinuities. Jacques Derrida termed this 'spacing' as the "time of writing" which consists of both horizontal fluctuations and recurring vertical profundities (cf. Derrida in Meisel 1981:179).

Jacques Derrida appropriates Freud's idea of the mystic writing pad as the form for consciousness and refers to it as "Being-in-the-world of the psyche" (cited in Meisel 1981:179; cf. McIlleron 2003). This implies that the interiority of a subject's concept of time must collude with the exteriority of the collective's concept of time. Of course this collusion of time, this collusion of the subjective and collective experience(s) / history(ies) is a central and inveterate obsession found in the *oeuvre* of William Kentridge. Anne McIlleron, curator of Kentridge's works, writes in her MA Research Report:

The entwining of what is intimate and private with what is public constitutes a remarked and recurrent theme in Kentridge's works; historical events are understood only as they are refracted through the minutiae of individual lives, whilst individual lives become comprehensible as the counterpoint to larger events surrounding them (2003:5).

For instance, Kentridge includes the image of Anne, his wife, in *WEIGHING ... and WANTING*; his idea of home (referenced through the use of comforting images such as tea cups, reminiscent of the extravagant colonial high tea taken / enjoyed in the late afternoons at the height of apartheid); the comforting presence of cats; the luxurious bed that Soho Eckstein so often reclines in; and even Felix Teitlebaum's affair with Mrs. Eckstein. This personal narrative of Soho/Felix is situated within the larger context of apartheid and South Africa's civil war — riots, unemployment, dislocations, disenfranchisement, racism, and violence (see *Figure 8.17* and *Figure 8.18*).



Figure 8.17 Black and white photograph of white miners' strike, Johannesburg 1922 (Christov-Bakargiev 1998:11).



Figure 8.18 Drawing from *Sobriety, Obesity & Growing Old* (Christov-Bakargiev 1998:11).

Jacques Derrida emphasises that Freud's 'mystic writing pad'

joins the two empirical certainties by which we are constituted: infinite depth in the implication of meaning, in the unlimited envelopment of the present, and, simultaneously, the pellicular essence of being, the absolute absence of foundation (cited in McIlleron 2003:10; and Meisel 1981:174).

Once again, if applied to Kentridge's films as they are understood to contain the unconscious of an individual's psyche, thus this quote of Derrida's is an excellent definition of Kentridge's films. Put aside the oft-repeated description of Kentridge's layered approach to drawing his films, and one can unpack Derrida's quote in relation to Kentridge's films in another way. There is immeasurable profundity in the interpretation of Kentridge's works. They are also, by way of their medium,

forever in the present. They are literally and metaphorically pellucid pellicles of being — by way of proxy — his being (or at least a part of what makes up the multiplicity that is William Kentridge).

This is similar to the concept of intertextuality, which was introduced by Julia Kristeva (1996). Intertextuality refers to the way in which texts have multiple meanings, how they interrelate with other texts, how texts assimilate other texts, cannibalise them, or allude to them. Through this interrelatedness, a text will contain residues and traces of texts having come before it and after it, which then reside within the text itself, and therefore have many different connotations. The charcoal residues and traces are left behind on the still drawings that make up his film footage. In *Another Country* he takes an actual artefact, a tin of *Sunbeam* polish, and its slogan, “*Shine ... Shine*” and incorporates it into the film. As mentioned before, he uses other texts such as archival and documentary footage in his films. Kristeva also emphasises that texts are not made in isolation but are ideological constructs that bring with them resonances of politics, ideology, culture, religion and beliefs and values (1996; cf. Bullock, Stallybrass and Trombley 1988). There is obviously a proliferation of interpretations of Kentridge’s work. No interpretation can claim to be the final one. Each of Kentridge’s films enables multiple readings and reflects an aesthetic that melds together different levels and images, and the erosion of limits and boundaries. These films are open to new meanings and interpretations, dependent on ongoing interaction. They constitute a system where truth is contingent, and where there may be dominant images, but where others make their presence felt as well. These films reflect a matrix with

ever-increasing connections and interconnections. They reveal increasing complexity, are opposed to simplification, and ultimately offer no final answers.

Michael Godby writes that

Kentridge in fact rejoices both in the suggestive openness of his forms and in the visible layering of images that tends to preclude any single fixed reading ... Kentridge also tends to refuse a final authoritative account of events (1992:unpaginated).

8.4 Time and space

There is a scene in *History of the Main Complaint* where Soho/Felix is driving his car at night through a thicket of ominous, very claustrophobic trees. His eyes / retina stare back at the audience in his car rear-view mirror. As he drives forward memories of South Africa's apartheid atrocities appear (electrodes that at first send electrical shocks across the car's screen thread their way through to a Sunday roast, which in turn attach themselves firstly to a toe and then most horrifyingly to a penis and testicles. The reference to the Sunday roast is obvious — while most white South Africans enjoyed their Sunday family dinners, black South Africans were being tortured through well documented, heinous torture techniques.) The memories give way to the present, where a dead body appears lying inert next to the road Soho/Felix traverses. Other individuals materialise — brutalised, trampled and kicked. As Soho/Felix lies in his coma, these attacks are chronicled on his body scan through the use of red pastel marks (see *Figures 8.19 — 8.28*). Almost subliminally fast, they are wiped out by a dual windscreen wiper / medical scanner — this “device” moves backwards and then forwards, and again, backwards and forwards, and then again. The rhythmic, soothing cadence is interrupted by the unexpected individual who dashes from the pitch black void directly in front of

Soho/Felix's car. The projecting front car head lights illuminate his shocked face — held momentarily in stasis — before the car hits him. Then there is a close-up of his face colliding with the windscreen — the force of which smashes / crushes his face, and the startling image of the imploding windscreen. At that very second Soho/Felix emerges from his coma. The implosion is not only one of bodies and hardware, but of time. The past, represented by apartheid's atrocities, collides with the present — the moment the car impacts with the person and the immediate present — Soho/Felix awakens from his coma. This traumatic collision of the past with the present(s) results not only in an awakening of his physical being (coma) but also of his unconscious being — repressed images of occurrences that took place in his (and South Africa's) past. Jessica Dubow and Ruth Rosengarten believe that this represents Walter Benjamin's "differentia of time" — a moment when the chronological time of the past and present collide in a freeze-frame (literally in Kentridge's case — as it is drawn thus) (2004:198). Benjamin's concept refers to the momentary discontinuity of time — time as it is understood to exist as fluid, ordered and uninterruptedly continuous. Dubow and Rosengarten suggest that Soho/Felix's crash is "a plunge into the time-image itself" (2004:198). They refer directly to Walter Benjamin's idea of the time facet compacting together the "what-has-been" and the "now" — unmoving in their emerged "consonance and dissonance" (Dubow and Rosengarten 2004:198). The car crash and simultaneous emerging from his coma are one — a dialectical shock, an experience of deficient temporality. This is the instant of time when something becomes conscious — in and during a confrontation with crisis. The confrontation is one of his conscious and unconscious and also a physical confrontation, that is,

the car impacting with the windscreen and the physical awakening of his being. Extrapolating from that, this confrontation is also one of responsibility and guilt. He feels responsible not only for the accident, a directly personal action, but responsible for acts of atrocity that were carried out while he was one of the white elite living in luxury and benefiting from apartheid. His guilt is for his own actions and also his non-actions (for instance, Soho/Felix's capitalistic gains, which would have been impossible without the rule and support of apartheid). Then there is his guilt at crashing into the man. There is also his guilt at not actively trying to stop apartheid. This is further implied when he simply continues to drive by the dead body lying in the ditch and does not stop to help when he sees a person being beaten to death. As with apartheid, he was aware of what was being carried out in the name of "democracy", but chose to look away. He continues to drive on and it takes the impact of the crash to make him stop. It is implied that Soho/Felix would have continued on his way had the accident not occurred. This is ironic, because even though the crash forces him to acknowledge his responsibility and guilt at the end of the film, he does nothing to address these "awakenings". He continues with his life as before.



Figure 8.19 Drawing from the *History of the Main Complaint* (Cameron, Christov-Bakargiev and Coetzee 1999:91).



Figure 8.20 Drawing from the *History of the Main Complaint* (Christov-Bakargiev 1998:38).



Figure 8.21 Drawing from the *History of the Main Complaint* (Cameron, Christov-Bakargiev and Coetzee 1999:92).

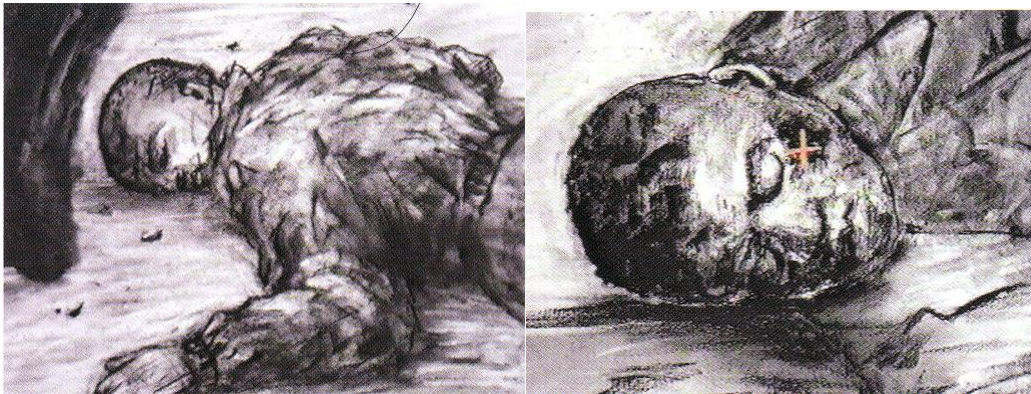


Figure 8.22 and Figure 8.23 Drawings from the *History of the Main Complaint* (Cameron, Christov-Bakargiev and Coetzee 1999:92).

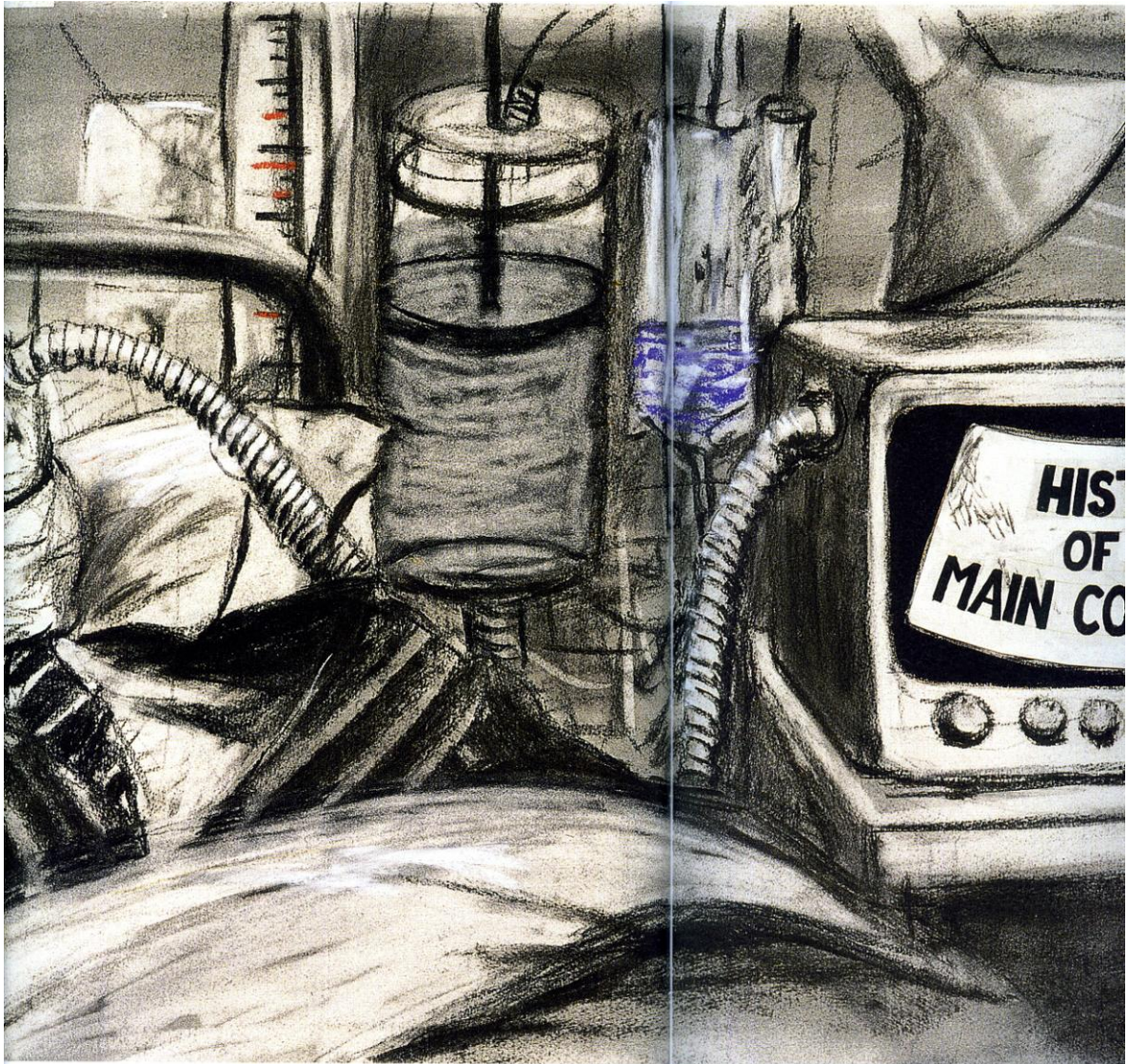


Figure 8.24 Drawing from *History of the Main Complaint* (Benezra, Boris, Cooke, Sitas and Cameron 2001:108—109).

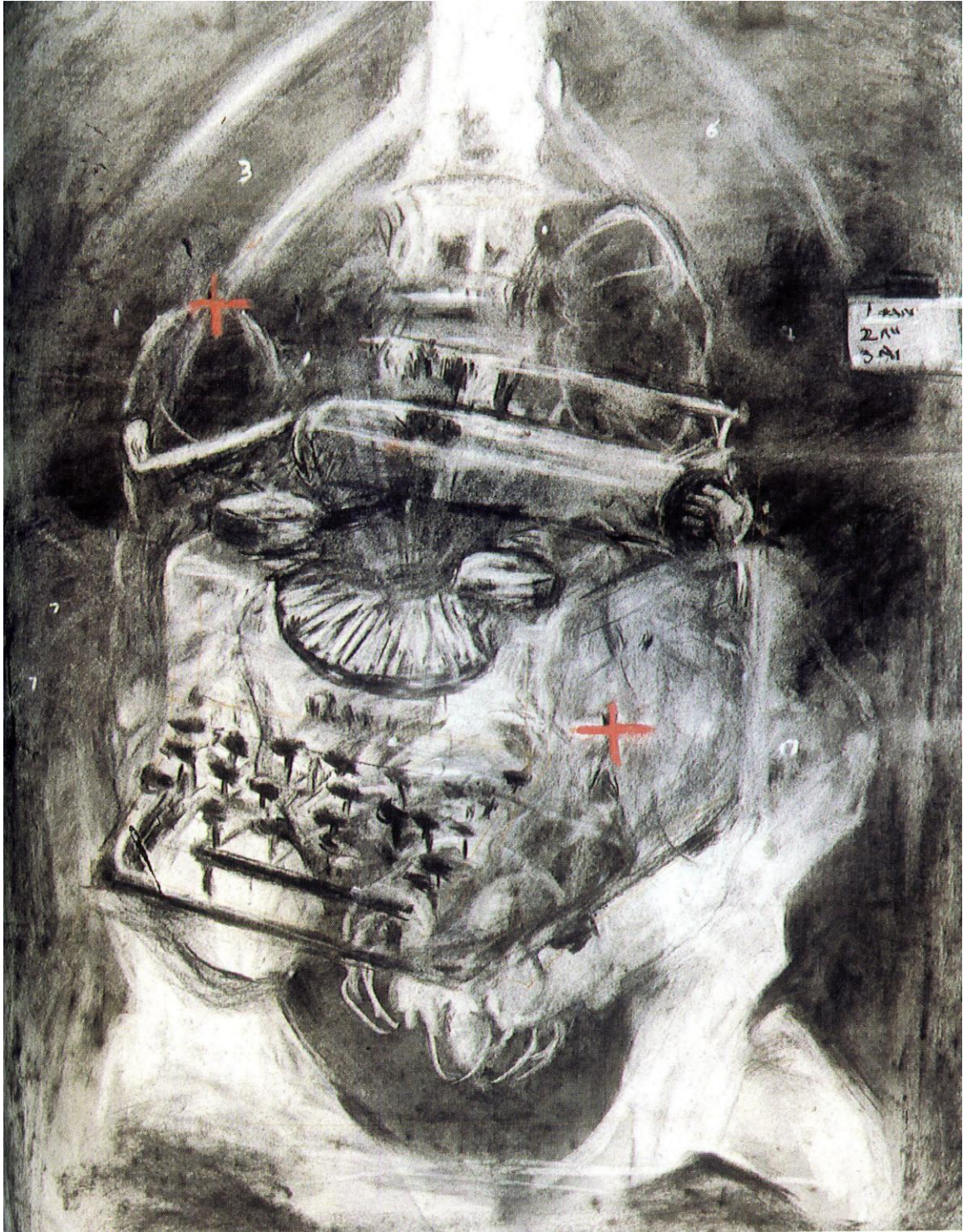


Figure 8.25 Drawing from *History of the Main Complaint* (Cameron, Christov-Bakargiev and Coetzee 1999:90).



Figure 8.26 Drawing from *History of the Main Complaint* (Benezra, Boris, Cooke, Sitas and Cameron 2001:108).



Figure 8.27 Drawing from *History of the Main Complaint* (Benezra, Boris, Cooke, Sitas and Cameron 2001:109).



Figure 8.28 Drawing from the *History of the Main Complaint* (Benezra, Boris, Cooke, Sitas and Cameron 2001:114).

The film *History of the Main Complaint* was made in 1996, the year the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was formed, as a direct response to the TRC. As there was no “revolution”, or overt break in social relations, the TRC was seen as a compromise to appease both sides (victims and tormentors / perpetrators) with the hope of healing rifts — making it possible for the oppressed to live harmoniously with their oppressors. Dubow and Rosengarten refer to the retrieval of the past injected into the current present as “psychic historicism: that is to say, the creation of temporal delineation as part of the remedial relation of sickness to cure, of retrieval to reflection to repair” (2004:200). They imply that this retrieval of past trauma(s) through giving voice to them would allow for closure, allowing South

Africans to heal and move forward into the new present. Dubow and Rosengarten emphasise that the TRC was to be a means of consigning history to the past.

These ideas are psychoanalytical ones. Sigmund Freud, in his book *Mourning and Melancholia* writes about “*trauerarbeit*” (1917 / 1957; cf. Dubow and Rosengarten 2004; Freud 2005; Rycroft 1972) (mentioned in previous chapters; also used by William Kentridge in one of his images from *Black Box / Chambre Noir*; see Figure 8.31). This work of mourning involves working through these feelings by expressing them verbally, externalising them. Of course, this process is an example of the use of Freud’s technique that makes up psychoanalysis — his “talking cure”, which involves exteriorising repressed memories / traumas which results in psychical healing and closure. Freud did not limit the idea of mourning to an individual’s lost loved one but extended it to include other “objects” such as the loss of democracy or the loss of one’s home. Freudian influenced historians such as Hayden White (1996) and Keith Jenkins (1996), who also argues that collective / community traumas need to undergo this “labour of mourning” before a new collective / national identity can be created. These traumas need to be acknowledged before a new subjectivity(ies) can be formed. However Freud does stress that the significant part of mourning is not the process itself, but rather the end result — closure — which allows memory(ies) to find their place and hence healing to begin. The TRC’s aims are therefore encapsulated in Freud’s “*trauerarbeit*” (1917 / 1957; cf. Freud 2005). Soho/Felix’s experience mirrors that of the TRC — although it is debatable whether or not Soho/Felix achieves closure, as his life continues as before. The implication then is that Soho/Felix has not

psychically healed; he is locked in a perpetual traumatic present. The exploding watch worn by the person he crashes into points to that — it stops at a specific time, forever in the present. Without closure, Soho/Felix is doomed to obsess about the “lost object” — his unresolved feelings of guilt and responsibility repetitively resurging — he becomes, in Freudian terms, a melancholic (see *Figure 8.30*).

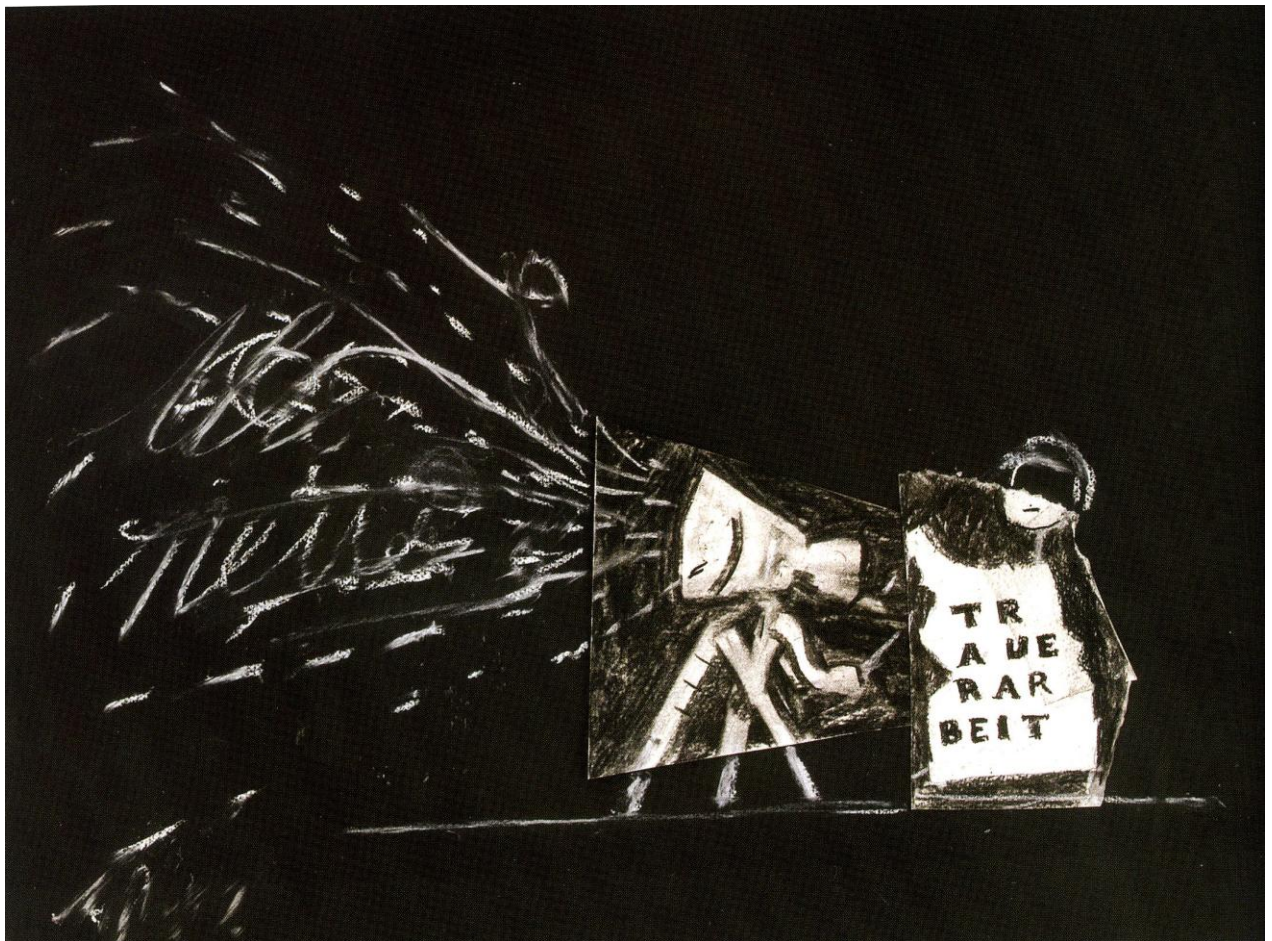


Figure 8.29 Drawing from *Black Box / Chambre Noir* (edited by Law-Viljoen 2007a:front cover).

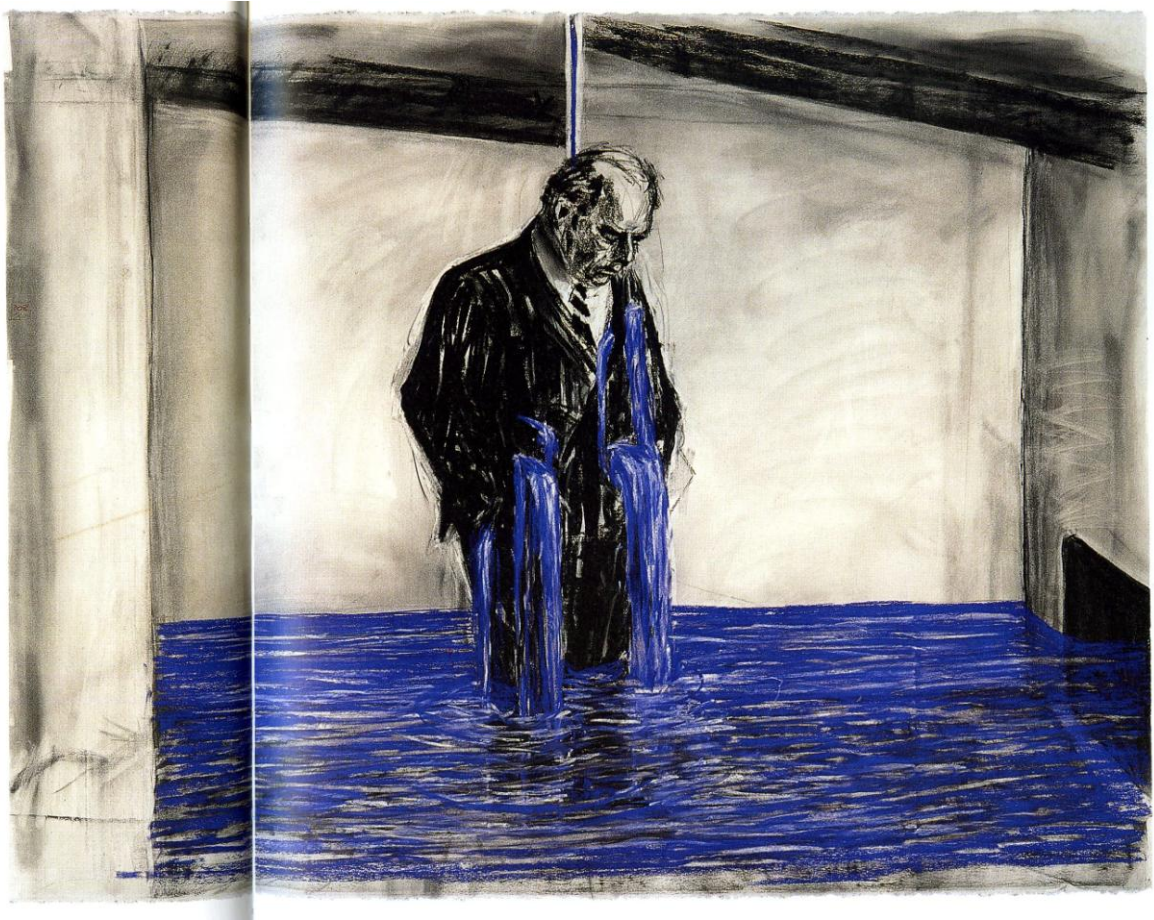


Figure 8.30 Drawing from *Stereoscope* (Benezra, Boris, Cooke, Sitas and Cameron 2001:133).

Victims / survivors of genocides / atrocities / wars often lack the words and images to describe or present as witness their experiences. However, theorist Janine Altounian points out that it is precisely “on the written scene that the memory of an event that cannot be remembered may be built — through displacement, through ‘translation’”⁴ (cited in Rollet 2007:169). Sylvie Rollet believes that it is through the reciprocity between the cinematic image and mental images that films resurrect remembrances. She therefore concludes that films are not merely a form of

⁴ “Displacement” is a Freudian term that relates to his concept of cathexis (Freud 1900 / 1991a; cf. Rycroft 1972; and *Chapter Three*).

representation: “Cinema is an active, dynamic reciprocity between two entities” (2007:169). She goes on to argue that cinema is a “site” of reconstruction or “re-representation” where the ghostly memories of the past are neatly resurrected and reinstated. She writes “[c]inema appears, therefore, to be the tool of recollection for a disremembered, collective history” (2007:172). While she is specifically referring to mainstream cinema, of course this applies directly to Kentridge’s works too, although the medium of film making differs considerably. It is an argument for cinema as engagement and images working as triggers to release memories packed away in one’s deepest recesses of the unconscious. She also posits that memory is inseparable from an image (Rollet 2007:172). She continues to argue that this is specifically so in film because the filmmaking device is one of projection — the same as is found in the psychoanalysis of Freud. Technology intersects with the term’s psychological meaning. According to Jacques Derrida, cinema encourages:

‘grafts’ of spectrality, it inscribes the traces of ghosts in a general framework, the projected film, which is itself a ghost. [...] Cinema is the absolute simulacrum of absolute survival. It tells us the story of that from which there is no return, it tells us the story of death (cited in Rollet 2007:173).

Film as a response to unexpressed / repressed collective trauma — even though “absence” resides in film, it provides a space or place where individual histories can join the flow of collective histories. So for instance, with Kentridge, he tells his own story or narrative of Soho/Felix, but his narrative provides a place to explore collective stories too, those also relating to apartheid and their experiences of this fascist regime. The spectator-witness plays a role in the reconstruction of

memories — the audience ensures a shared experience or a sharing of memories that also serves to “out” the individual’s memory (Rollet 2007:173).

Memory can be seen as rather unsteady and insecure, and one can go so far as to perceive it as a form of “displacement” (Baronian, Besser and Jansen 2007:12). This is in as far as memory is inherently constantly moving and in flux. Individual / personal memory and collective memory (or cultural memory), or post-memory (Hirsch 1997) consist of “re-articulations and re-enactments” (Baronian, Besser and Jansen 2007:12).

As already emphasised, memory is formed by the process of bearing testimony / witness and through forgetting, and memory is by nature performative, a process that associates with the space of identity, and is not secured by it. Therefore its “temporal status is always in the present” (Huysen 1995:3). Anne-Marie Fortier defines a place of re-membering as

a place of collective memory in which elements of the past are cobbled together to mould a communal body of belonging. It is a place where individual lives, present and past, are called upon to inhabit the present space, to ‘member’ it (cited in Baronian, Besser and Jansen 2007:76).

Roland Barthes (1981) introduces one to the concept of the “*punctum*” — the point of memory. Using this concept, one can take images from the past as “points of memory”, which implies a criss-crossing of the past and the present, memory and post-memory and individual memories with collective memories. The word “point” is spatio-temporal — physical, such as geographical site, and also an instant in time — and therefore signifies the interconnectedness of spatio-temporality in the

mechanisms of both individual and collective memory. A point is piercing and so sharp that it can puncture. Etymologically, *punctum*, is a “little hole” or “puncture”, relating to *pungo*, “to puncture” or “stab”: conjuring up images of wounds — memories as wounds, to return briefly to previous work in this study (Chambers Concise Dictionary 2004:968). Marianne Hirsch and Leo Spitzer posit that like Barthes’ *punctum*, points of memory perforate / penetrate through different layers, including those of “oblivion, interpellating those who seek to know about the past” (2007:141). A point can also be tiny, a miniscule detail which belies a past. It can therefore communicate the past as dissected fragments that have been passed down to us and exist in the present. These “points of memory” can provide profound or “piercing” insights that transcend time, space and experience. Points, of course, can also proliferate and in doing so they can communicate dissimilar perceptions and frames of reference, preventing one singular meaning. Hirsch and Spitzer suggest that remnants or points from the past “prick and wound and grab and puncture, like the *punctum* — unsettling assumptions, exposing the unexpected, suggesting what Barthes calls ‘a subtle beyond,’ or the ‘blind field’ outside the frame” (2007:141). This is what Kentridge’s works are like — *punctums* that make one question the past in the ever present. He (re)produces fragments of the past or “points of memory” to help one remember and generate remembrance. For Roland Barthes the “point of memory” is first identified by some personal connection, a memory or partial memory that draws one in to the bigger picture. It suggests a personalisation or subjectivity and an acknowledgement of the ordinary / mundane in the extraordinary. For example, one sees Kentridge’s

use of the coffee plunger, the inclusion of an obsidian sculpted head, cat(s) et cetera — everyday objects / things placed in surreal contexts.

While Barthes' memorial *punctum* is predominantly viewed as personal / subjective / individual, this *punctum* can also be viewed as being dependent on collective and/or social factors / effects. For example, the images of hundreds of workers exploding out of a tax calculator might simply be a surrealist image for individuals who are not viewing the images from a cultural / historical perspective, a perspective that has not been influenced by capitalism and colonialism and which immediately puts those images into a different context and hence a different meaning. As personal and cultural interpretations, points of memory are dependent on the social factors that influence individuals and how these individuals experience factors such as politics, age, class, race, ethnicity, religion and even power relations (the 'haves' versus the 'have-nots'). Through various interpretations these points of memory reveal historical and cultural meanings, even leading to the questioning of certain associations. For instance, in *Mine*, Kentridge uses the coffee plunger to track a route from the bed of the capitalist, Soho Eckstein, through the horrific scene of underground workers in a very dark, dank, claustrophobic mine, to an image of a slave ship. The point of memory begins as a personal one, an association with the ordinary, a coffee plunger, as it descends into the somewhat surrealistic mine, in the transformation into a mine shaft, the points of memory become social / cultural / historical — they represent the greed of the colonialists, the rapists of the earth, the exploiters of man and land. Then, as the plunger continues, the point of memory continues too — into a

slave ship that then enables the individual to make the association that the miners are no more than that — slave workers, living under horrific conditions to supply colonials with almost free labour. Without the first point of association, the first point of memory (the coffee plunger), the individual watching the film might never have been drawn into the rest of these meanings. They might not make the connection between apartheid and colonialism. Colonialism, capitalism, slave ships and the ‘haves’ and ‘have-nots’ all have a specific meaning for a white South African living under apartheid — a South African subject who has been shaped politically and culturally by his background. These images also serve to uncover certain intersections between such factors as class, race and gender. The ordinary point of memory also serves to challenge the viewer or interpreter of such images — bringing into question associations not thought of before — the cultural and historical association between the early colonialists taking ships of slave labour to western countries, and the latter-day colonialists using mine labourers as nothing more than slave labour. While those taught of such associations and enlightened by education might find these observations obvious, to individuals not aware of their own socialisation, not aware of their identity and subjectivity having been shaped and formed by apartheid and all its inherent associations, these are shocking revelations that enforce memory, bringing memory(ies) to the fore, bringing cultural / collective memory to the forefront. Kentridge’s works therefore serve to keep visible individual memory in relation to cultural memory (for instance, they might lead one to question his/her own role in upholding apartheid or using labour as slave labour — for example the realisation that one is using a domestic worker as an exploited labourer, condoned and in fact encouraged by apartheid

and its laws and beliefs). For Roland Barthes, the *punctum* is about the overt and the covert, the visible and the invisible. With regards to the “subtle beyond”, or the “blind field” outside the frame (cited in Hirsch and Spitzer 2007:141; cf. Barthes 1981) if a tiny, seemingly insignificant detail / point, however, misaligned, interpellates a subject, it literally blocks out other details found within an image, even though these other details might be central or significant to the image as a whole. The focus on the coffee-plunger in an surreal environment / larger image serves to draw in the subject leading the subject to a variety of memories, questions, associations not actually found on the screen — these associations are made beyond or outside of the filmic frame itself. Barthes refers to this “subtle beyond” as an “insistent gaze” — an intense gaze that turns outward of a frame towards the beyond, that which cannot be contained within a specific frame (in Kentridge’s case literally a filmic frame) (cited in Hirsch and Spitzer 2007:141; cf. Barthes 1981:49-51). This “beyond” is important, for the author of this study on Kentridge — as it allows for associations to be made, important questions to be asked by the subject — not only of his/her own identity and subjectivity and personal memories but of the wider societal / cultural memories as well as his/her role within those latter memories. Furthermore, as the author of this doctoral dissertation, the opinion put forward here is that in Kentridge’s films, this point is not only an “insistent gaze” turned outward, but an “insistent gaze” turned inward.

The second part of Barthes’ book, *Camera Lucida* (1981), focuses on the *punctum*, not spatially, but in terms of “Time”. In his writings Barthes states

I now know that there exists another *punctum* (another “*stigmatum*”) than the “detail.” This new *punctum*, which is no longer of form but of intensity, is Time, the lacerating emphasis of the *noeme* (“that-has-been”), its pure representation (1981:96; cf. Hirsch and Spitzer 2007).

This *punctum* of “Time” is directly related to mourning / death, loss, absence and change — all of which are inevitable. This *punctum* refers to the incongruity between the meaning of an object in the past and its meaning in the present. This is what Kentridge’s works deal with in the manner of their making and in their content. His drawings reveal and conceal, insisting that one attempts to perceive the spaces between the drawings or filmic frames, to perceive the hesitations, the silence and the empty space or “absence”. They therefore do not simply impress upon one to view the presence, but through Barthes’ “insistent gaze” to view the presence and the absence. His oeuvre impresses upon us the way in which different individuals live / experience the same historical moment differently. This is the temporal incongruity that Barthes refers to. Kentridge’s works also reveal a different reading from when they were shown when they were first made (1999) and the readings / interpretations of the work now (2010 / 2011). Yet both hold validity. Different individuals have the same experiences but with different outcomes. Both have credibility yet have juxtaposing meanings, then and now.

8.5 Conclusion

This chapter focused on history as metafiction, identity, and time and space. The most important event that has been covered in this chapter as it relates to these ideas is that of The Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Michel Foucault describes the narrative process of history as the decomposing and restructuring of

documents through the creation of new relations (cited in Poster 1984), which is what has happened with The Truth and Reconciliation Commission — the hearings, and the narrative process of the hearings gave South Africans a new, or different perspective of apartheid and its effects. And during this process it is memory and the individual's memories that produce history — history is re-arranged through the process of “bisociation” — a term coined by Arthur Koestler to refer to the merging of disparate contexts. It is the combining, reshuffling, and the relating of separate ideas, facts, frames of perception and associative contexts (cited in Madison 1990). Gary Brent Madison (1990) further states that the image or memory of the image produces new and relevant meaning in its sequentialisation. And that is what has happened with South Africa's history. Apartheid and its practices are now acknowledged as wrong, and now you have new images to sustain *that* history — images and memories, eye-witness accounts of torture; detention without trial; interrogation brutality; captivity; individuals lost / missing, raped and murdered. Whether or not one agrees that the TRC was successful in terms of reparation and convictions, or whether or not it served to heal and repair (Foster, Haupt, and de Beer 2005), it did successfully achieve one thing — it laid bare the innards of the atrocity that was apartheid, its intricate workings, and the complicated infrastructure that every white South African was a part of. No longer can one ignore or deny the reality and repercussions of apartheid. It laid bare South Africans' identities.

CHAPTER NINE: MEMORY, LANDSCAPES, CITIES AND MONUMENTS

Throughout this thesis (albeit pre-dominantly in *Chapter Eight*) William Kentridge's *oeuvre* has been likened to a palimpsest — in other words, it has been characterised as sedimentary. His work consists of layers — in different mediums of charcoals, pastels, inks, sugar lifts. Even his miniature theatre production *Black Box / Chambre Noir* is comprised of layers of little theatre production sets positioned one in front of the other, from largest to smallest, for perspective purposes (*Figures 9.1 — 9.3*). This idea of his work as a palimpsest / sediments is in turn linked to his charcoal drawing / animation work that leaves traces behind, remnants of what has come before (hence the reference to Sigmund Freud's *A Note upon the Mystic Writing Pad* (1899a)). His work conjures up a dissection and internal view of land — one layer of earth impacted upon another layer of earth. Each layer of earth holds remnants / traces and information of what that particular layer has had built upon it. The archaeological dig gives up information, secrets even, to be decoded and interpreted, of what the land has held / possessed, that has since been buried and then unearthed. Kentridge's *oeuvre*, however, is not just metaphorically and physically linked to the idea of sediments. His work actually contains many instances of images of land / landscapes themselves. Landscapes in Kentridge's work abound — landscapes of steel, metal and glass, as well as landscapes of earth, even internal views of the physical landscape (such as found in *Mine*). From some of his earliest works (for example his still-life series *Colonial Landscapes* (1995 — 1996; see *Figure 9.74* and *Figure 9.75*) and co-created (with artist Doris Bloom) multi-media series *Memory and Geography* (1995

and 1996); see *Figure 9.4* and *Figure 9.76*) he has concerned himself with the physical landscape(s) / cityscape(s). The colonial and post-colonial landscape; the land and body as one; the city of Johannesburg as it mirrors his unconscious; the inner city (including scenes of riots); and the Highveld around Johannesburg, are a few of his themes / subjects / motifs (see *Figures 9.5 — 9.9*). One of the videos that the artist was kind enough to make accessible for purposes of this study is of him walking through vast stretches of the Highveld, with mine dumps in the background. The starkness and barrenness of him walking alone — desolate and eerie, yet startling beautiful, conjures up images of his creation Soho/Felix. William Kentridge has said that “[t]here is a sense of drawing a social or historical landscape. The process of actually making the drawing finds that history because the landscape itself hides it” (cited in Christov-Bakargiev 1998:23).

This chapter deals specifically with these themes / subjects, that is, landscapes, cities and monuments. Walter Benjamin wrote in his work titled *Berlin Chronicle*:

Language shows clearly that memory is not an instrument for exploring the past but its theatre. It is the medium of past experience, as the ground is the medium in which dead cities lie interred. He who seeks to approach his own buried past must conduct himself like a man digging ... He must not be afraid to return again and again to the same matter, to scatter it as one scatters earth, to turn it over as one turns over soil. For the matter itself is only a deposit, a stratum, which yields only to the most meticulous examination what constitutes the real treasure hidden in the earth: the images, severed from all earlier associations, that stand – like precious fragments or torsos in a collector’s gallery – in the prosaic rooms of our later understanding (cited in Coombes 2003:116; cf. Benjamin 1963).

This quote is obviously appropriate to Kentridge’s work. The reasons why will be explicated in more detail below.



Figure 9.1 Photograph of *Black Box / Chambre Noir* miniature theatre (William Kentridge *Black Box / Chambre Noir* edited by Law-Viljoen 2007a:unpaginated).



Figure 9.2 Photograph of *Black Box / Chambre Noir* miniature theatre (William Kentridge *Black Box / Chambre Noir* edited by Law-Viljoen 2007a:unpaginated).



Figure 9.3 Photograph of *Black Box / Chambre Noir* miniature theatre (William Kentridge *Black Box / Chambre Noir* edited by Law-Viljoen 2007a:unpaginated).



Figure 9.4 Colour aerial photograph of *Memory and Geography* (1995) William Kentridge (and Doris Bloom), multi-media project, Rome (Christov-Bakargiev 1998:20).



Figure 9.5 Drawing for *Woyzeck on the Highveld* (Benezra, Boris, Cooke, Sitas and Cameron 2001:24).



Figure 9.6 Drawing from *WEIGHING ... and WANTING* (Christov-Bakargiev 1998:137).

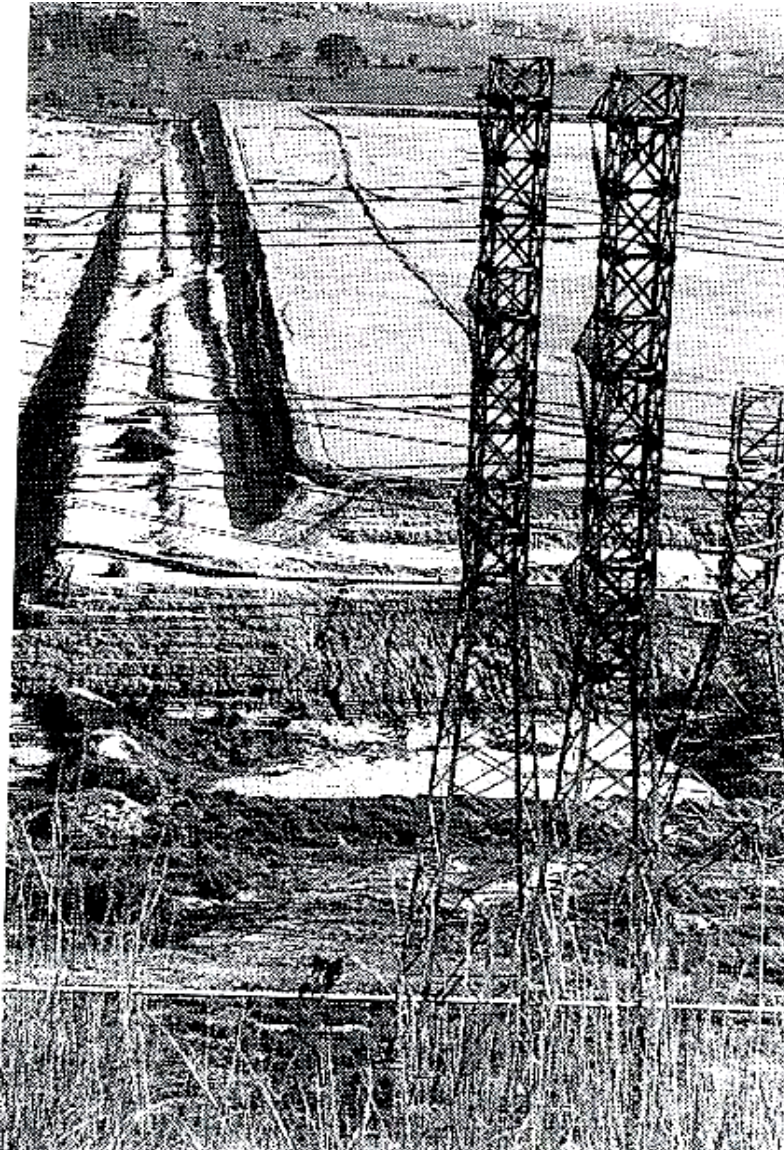


Figure 9.7 Photograph of disused mine dumps and electrical pylons (Christov-Bakargiev 1998:26).



Figure 9.8 Drawing from *Sobriety, Obesity & Growing Old* (Christov-Bakargiev 1998:11).



Figure 9.9 Photograph of white miners' strike 1922 (Christov-Bakargiev 1998:11).

9.1 Landscapes

“Landscapes” is originally a term used by geographers to refer to culturally embedded geographies (Osborne 2001:5). As constructions / formations of human-created material forms, they represent cultural records lying palimpsest-like spatio-temporally, and as such they can be excavated / interrogated as relics and symbolically laden signifiers of meaning (Cosgrove 1998; Meinig 1979; Sauer 1963). From the Sauerian (Carl O. Sauer) geography / anthropology-impelled perspective of landscape as constructions / formations of physical / material culture-traits and complexes, the impetus has now moved to a more nuanced decoding of the emblematic meaning of landscapes (Osborne 2001; cf. Sauer 1963). Denis Cosgrove suggests

that landscape constitutes a discourse through which identifiable social groups historically have framed themselves and their relations with both the land and with other human groups, and that this discourse is related epistemologically and technically to ways of seeing (Cosgrove 1998:xiv).

This is an idea pertinent to Kentridge’s works, because he wants one to literally “see” the landscape as having been marked. This is why he uses red pastels to highlight land sites in his stills and films (see *Figure 9.10*).



Figure 9.10 Drawing from *Felix in Exile* (Cameron, Christov-Bakargiev and Coetzee 1999:124).

Through day-by-day living and dying in specific places, the “abstraction of space is transformed into a social and psychic geography” (Osborne 2001:5). This is especially true of Kentridge’s works, where he positions the bodies as they have died, which in turn become newspapers and then mounds of earth — the remnants of what has taken place there is now only psychical. Both a cognitively derived knowing about a place and an innate sense of place(s) / landscapes are subsumed into individuals’ identity (see *Figures 9.11 — 9.13*). Charles Tilley argues that:

[p]laces, like persons, have biographies in as much as they are formed, used, and transformed in relation to practice ... stories acquire part of their mythic value and historical relevance if they are rooted in the concrete details of locales in the landscape, acquiring material reference points that can be visited, seen and touched (1994:33).

In other words, by living somewhere, abstract space becomes particular place through the processes and actions of social and material means.



Figure 9.11 Drawing from *Felix in Exile* (Christov-Bakargiev 1998:91).

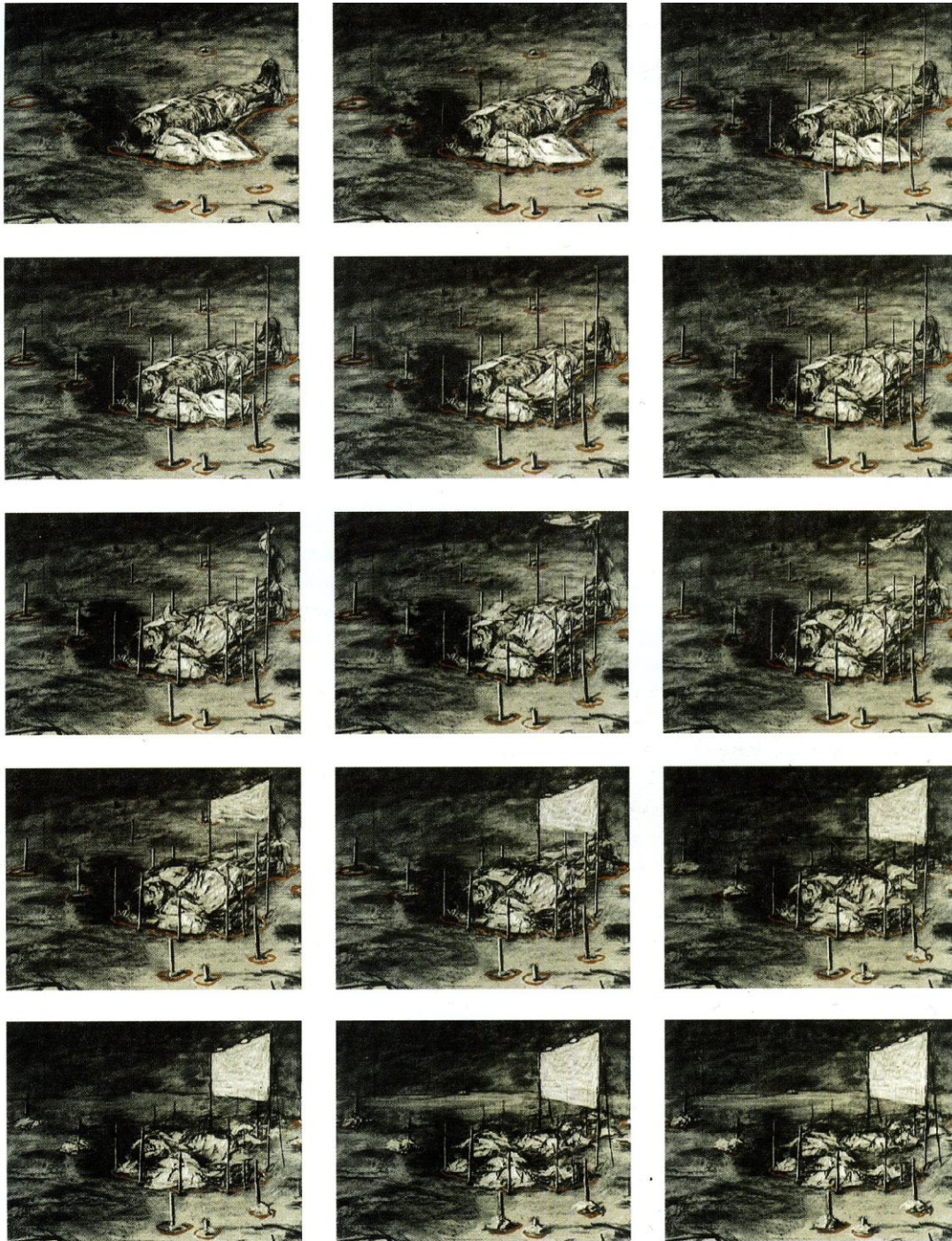


Figure 9.12 Drawing from *Felix in Exile* (Benezra, Boris, Cooke, Sitas and Cameron 2001:28).



Figure 9.13 Drawing from *Felix in Exile* (Benezra, Boris, Cooke, Sitas and Cameron 2001:99).

It is well documented how place is of great significance to pre-modern, non-western, communities in terms of cultural ecology, subsistence living, communal organisation and beliefs (Osborne 2001). Underlying this idea is the suggestion that physical surroundings are infused with complex symbolic relationships. The interweaving of place and self can be very forceful:

many premodern and preliterate societies are bound to the land in the sense that they and place seem to be virtually one. This is encouraged by the use of landscape as part of memory in an oral society that must remember everything about itself and its practices. Hence place, of necessity must be more intimately a part of its own culture. It is enhanced by the tendency in these cultures to blur distinctions between the natural and the cultural, the living and the dead. Place is often inhabited by the spirits of the ancestors,

or the place may have been given to the people by the gods (Sack 1997:136).

This idea is central to modern times too. Places of the dead, such as death, concentration and internment camps are often considered to be sacred / sacrosanct and infused with the ghosts of the dead. Kentridge's mini-production theatre, *Black Box / Chambre Noir* deals with these concepts in depth. The artwork of this piece focuses on the Herero peoples and their attempt to hold on to their land and identities (see *Chapter Eight* for more details). Germany attempted to colonise the peoples and their lands — using them for cheap labour, and mining their land. When the Herero resisted and were forced to fight for their land, the Germans decimated the community. Those that did not succumb to death through murder, starvation, and disease (they were placed in concentration camps) were forced to scatter and relocate, in some cases all the way to Botswana. The same can be said of the Native Americans who ended up being placed in dry, arid demarcated reservations. Of course, with Kentridge's focus on Johannesburg there is the implied reference to townships and so-called independent Bantustans. In his film *Felix in Exile* the dead individuals go through a “ghostly” appearance before succumbing to the land and being eradicated by newspapers — infusing the land with the ghosts of the dead (again see *Figures 9.11 — 9.13*).

Landscape is often seen not as a noun, but a verb, and one should ask of it:

not just what landscape *is* or *means* but what it *does*, how it works as a cultural practice. Landscape ... doesn't merely signify or symbolize power relations; it is an instrument of cultural power, perhaps even an agent of power that is ... independent of human intentions. Landscape as a cultural

medium thus [*sic*] has a double role with respect to something like ideology; it naturalizes a cultural and social construction, representing an artificial world as if it were simply given and inevitable (Mitchell 1994:1-2).

As Barbara Bender puts it: “[t]he landscape is never inert, people engage with it, re-work it, appropriate and contest it. It is part of the way in which identities are created and disputed, whether as individual, [or] group ...” (1993:3). There are many places in history and the world that are associated with blood and soil, which have to signify belonging: Masada (AD 73) for the Jews; Gallipoli (1916) for the Australians and New Zealanders; and Culloden (1746) for the Scots, are just a few (Ignatieff 1993).

Generally paintings of landscapes are what Andrea Latterwein calls “artified” – by this she means that they influence our artistic view of and pre-empt the translating of the “grids that we impose on the countryside” (2007:134). However, Andrea Latterwein (quoting Anselm Kiefer in support) challenges this perception as he believes that no landscape can be depicted “innocently” because “it has been for ever impregnated with history, with war, ‘an impure blood waters our furrows’...” (cited in Latterwein 2007:134). Anselm Kiefer, a second-generation German, born in 1945, has drawn many landscapes, which have been likened to Kentridge’s work by Staci Boris (2001). There is indeed a striking similarity between Kiefer’s landscapes and Kentridge’s — in terms of both themes and portrayals of landscapes. For example, some of Kiefer’s landscapes also consist of many layers — thickly layered oils with mixed materials, sometimes straw and sometimes ash. Obviously by their very definition oil paintings are layered, but it seems as though

Kiefer is at pains to layer some of his landscapes in a deliberate manner — the paintings are almost overburdened with paint — thickly clotted and very rough. They too then conjure up the idea of excavating his paintings — for they too are sedimental. Kiefer's use of ash is also similar to Kentridge's use of charcoal. The use of grey ash and/or charcoal — Kentridge uses brushes and “paints” with loose charcoal, as one would make use of paint — brings to mind the ash that was emitted from the crematoria. Many survivors have commented on how the ash fell around them continually, especially when the crematoria were working at their maximum. Andrea Latterwein refers to one of Kiefer's landscape paintings in a watercolour entitled *Sick Art* (1975; see *Figure 9.14*; *Figure 9.20*; *Figure 9.22*; *Figures 9.27 — 9.29*). The Nordic landscape is covered with snow which in turn is covered with oozing, pulsating red boils. These red boils instead of being ugly are actually very aesthetically pleasing (if one is ignorant of what they represent, one can transcend their real meaning). That they are depicted as pretty though is not accidental — Kiefer seeks to make the point that the Nordic landscape revels in its unmasked beauty and is opposed to history. If one was to portray a landscape that depicts history accurately one would have to paint very aesthetically displeasing images. Kiefer speaks of the contamination of landscapes by ideology (2007:134). Kiefer has said that the use of red directs one to an historical event — especially that which contains a “wound” (cited in Latterwein 2007:144). The same can be said of Kentridge's *Drawings for Projection* series, as well as his *Colonial Landscapes* series and the background film and stills for his play *Faustus in Africa!* (amongst others). Kentridge marks these “historical sites / wounds” in bright red

pastel which is in stark contrast to the grey and black charcoal which he predominantly uses, and takes up most of the drawings (see *Figures 9.34 and 9.35*).

Referring to the mass murder of the Jews and other supposed “undesirables”, it is a fact that their bodies were recycled and made into common artefacts such as soap, lampshades and fertilizer. This fertilizer was distributed throughout Germany to enhance the growth of landscapes and meadows. These in turn created food for both humans and animals. Latterwein writes that “[i]t is the logical conclusion to this cannibalistic recycling that the ashes became physically ubiquitous: they are absorbed into the countryside, into humans, and into every living thing” (2007:144).

Anselm Kiefer is also cited in Andrea Latterwein’s book, *Anselm Kiefer. Paul Celan. Myth, Mourning and Memory*: “I never see a forest that does not bear a mark or sign of history” (2007:133). This is an almost identical comment made by Kentridge with regard to Poland’s landscape (and most of Europe) as being tainted with blood, yet erased of all evidence, which is quoted in Chapter Three. Kentridge likens the landscapes of Poland to that of the Auschwitz crematoria, of which nothing remains (an idea that has been referred to throughout this study) (Christov-Bakargiev 1998:48).

Anselm Kiefer’s landscapes are scarified and empty. He portrays them in a “destructive” way and nature, instead of representing an individual’s reality, as has

been done previously during art's Romantic era, now depicts "collective history" and by extension collective memory (2007:133; see *Figures 9.15 — 19; Figures 9.21 — 9.26; and Figures 9.30 — 9.33*; also compare to Kentridge, see *Figure 9.34. and Figure 9.35*). This can also be said of Kentridge's landscapes — yet his are also infused with personal metanarratives and often a combination of both the personal and the collective. For example, in the film *Sobriety, Obesity & Growing Old* there is a scene of Soho Eckstein making love to his wife (with whom he has been re-united) in the middle of a vast landscape. This is a very personal and intimate act; however, they are surrounded by hundreds of faceless individuals (see *Figure 9.39*). Another example is a still from the film *WEIGHING ... and WANTING*: Soho/Felix is a tiny figure seemingly overwhelmed by large tracts of landscape containing huge pylons of steel for electricity and what appears to be discarded mining waste. In another still from the same film, Soho/Felix lays his head on a huge rock, which in turn lies on a vast, striated / scarified landscape populated with five tiny, barely identifiable individuals in the distance. In *Stereoscope*, Soho/Felix is surrounded by a landscape of mainly water; in the background is a huge factory with giant chimneys spewing out effluence into the sky, polluting it and the landscape around it (once again there is the association between ash, charcoal, chimneys and the crematoria).

Heiner Müller wrote the following poem, *Hamletmaschine*, from which these lines are taken:

I felt MY blood come out of MY veins
And turn MY body into the landscape

of MY death (cited and translated in Birringer 1990:86; cf. Saltzman 2000).

Obviously this is an apt description of the artistic endeavours featuring Kentridge's landscapes, where the bodies of apartheid victims become one with the land (especially seen in *Felix in Exile* — including the principle female character, Nandi, see *Figure 9.37*; also found in Anselm Kiefer's works – see *Figures 9.20 — 9.29*).

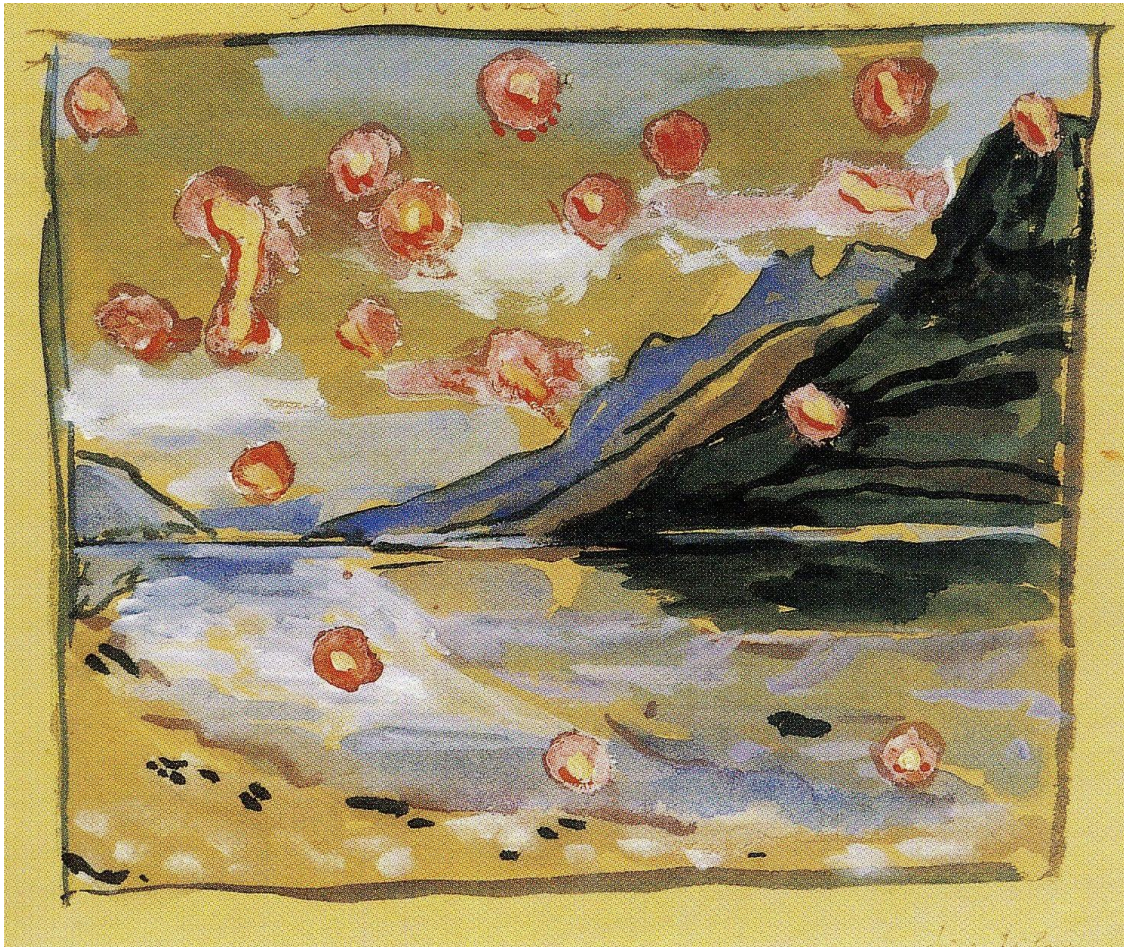


Figure 9.14 *Sick Art* (1974) Anselm Kiefer, watercolour on paper (Latterwein 2007:69).



Figure 9.15 *Operation Hagenbewegung* (1975) Anselm Kiefer, oil on burlap (Latterwein 2007:74).



Figure 9.16 *Siegfried Forgets Brünhilde* (1975) Anselm Kiefer, oil on canvas (Latterwein 2007:73).



Figure 9.17 *Operation Barbarossa* (1975) Anselm Kiefer, oil on burlap (Latterwein 2007:74).



Figure 9.18 *The World-Ash* (1982) Anselm Kiefer, burnt wood on acrylic, emulsion, shellac, straw on original photograph and canvas (Latterwein 2007:80).



Figure 9.19 *Your Golden Hair, Margarete* (1980) Anselm Kiefer, watercolour, gouache and acrylic on paper (Latterwein 2007:112).



Figure 9.20 *Ice and Blood* (1971) Anselm Kiefer, watercolour on paper (Latterwein 2007:134).



Figure 9.21 *Cauterization of the Rural District of Buchen* (1974) Anselm Kiefer, original photograph, iron oxide, linseed oil on fibrous paper (Latterwein 2007:136).



Figure 9.22 *Cauterization of the Rural District of Buchen* (1974) Anselm Kiefer, original photograph, iron oxide and linseed oil on fibrous paper (Latterwein 2007:137).



Figure 9.23 *Winter Landscape* (1970) Anselm Kiefer, watercolour on paper (Latterwein 2007:135).



Figure 9.24 *The Sands of Mark Brandenburg III* (1976 — 1977) Anselm Kiefer, book. Linseed oil and sand on original photographs and fibrous paper (Latterwein 2007:140).

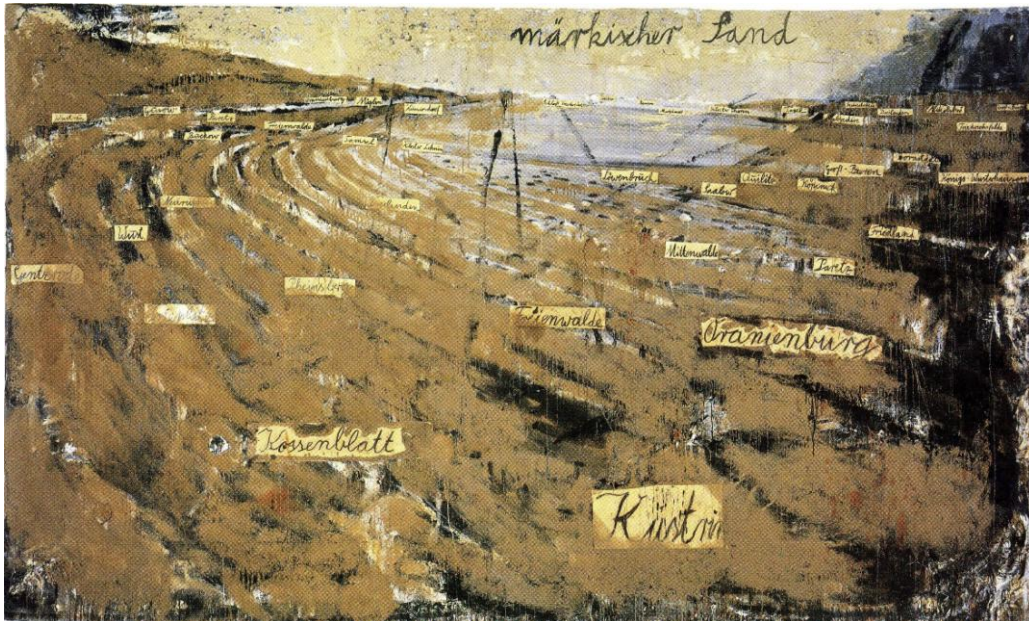


Figure 9.25 *The Sands of Mark Brandenburg* (1980) Anselm Kiefer, acrylic, shellac, sand and glue on photograph and burlap (Latterwein 2007:141).



Figure 9.26 *Lot's Wife* (1990) Anselm Kiefer, acrylic, emulsion and ashes on canvas with salt and lead (Latterwein 2007:26).



Figure 9.27 *Sol Invictus* (1995) Anselm Kiefer, sunflower seeds and emulsion on burlap (Latterwein 2007:168).



Figure 9.28 *Ash Flower* (1995) Anselm Kiefer, pencil, watercolour and ash on paper (Latterwein 2007:169).



Figure 9.29 *Reclining Man with Branch* (1971) Anselm Kiefer, watercolour, gouache and pencil on paper (Latterwein 2007:170).



Figure 9.30 *Your Ashen Hair, Shulamith* (1981) Anselm Kiefer, oil, acrylic, emulsion and straw on canvas (Latterwein 2007:94).



Figure 9.31 *Magarete — Shulamith* (1981) Anselm Kiefer, watercolour on paper (Latterwein 2007:112).



Figure 9.32 *Bohemia Lies by the Sea* (1995) Anselm Kiefer, oil, acrylic, emulsion, shellac on burlap (Latterwein 2007:186).

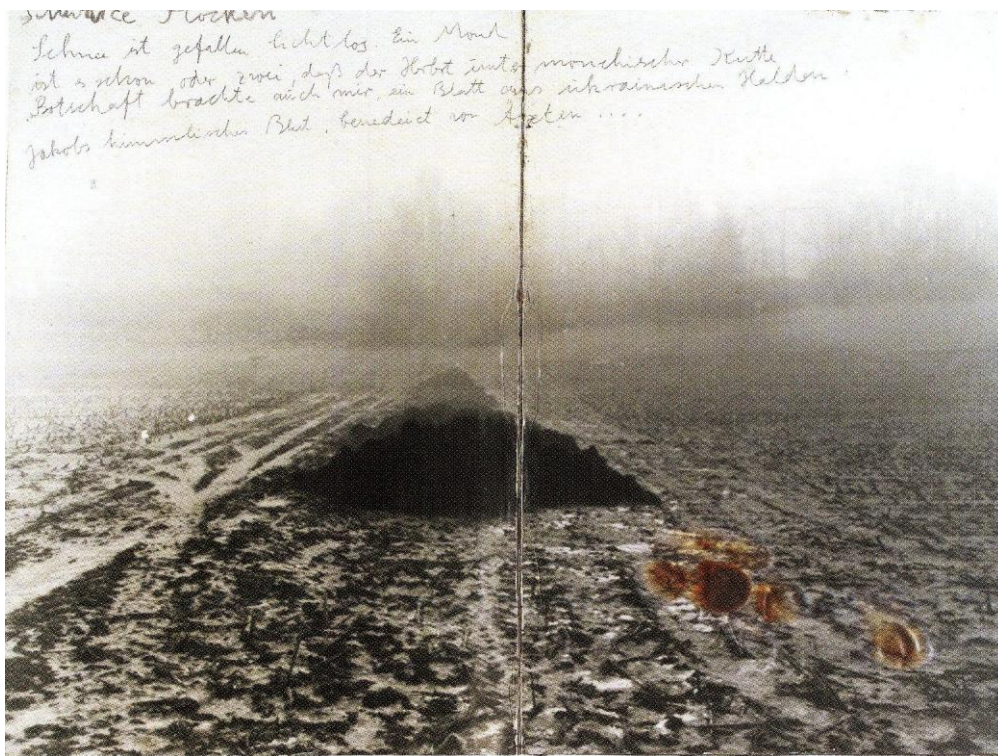


Figure 9.33 *The Song of the Cedar — For Paul Celan* (2005) Anselm Kiefer, book. Acrylic, charcoal, twigs and photograph on cardboard (Latterwein 2007:211).

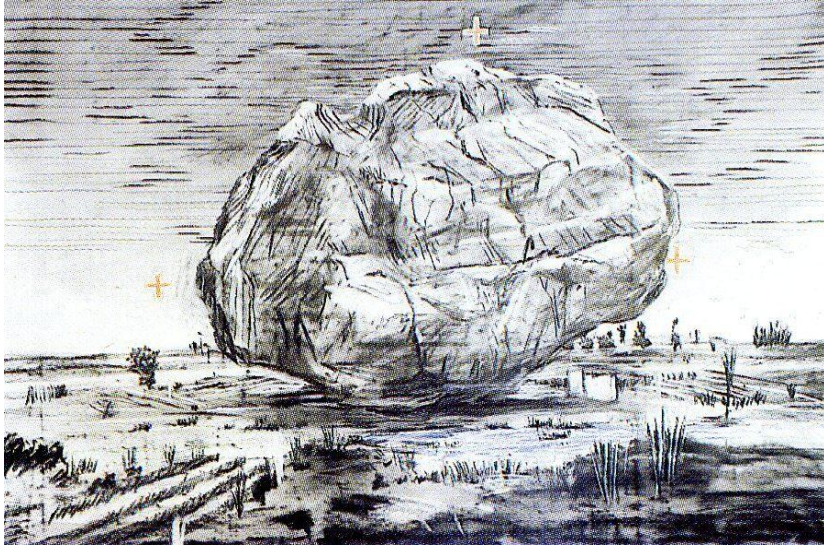


Figure 9.34 Drawing from *WEIGHING ... and WANTING* (Christov-Bakargiev 1998:137).

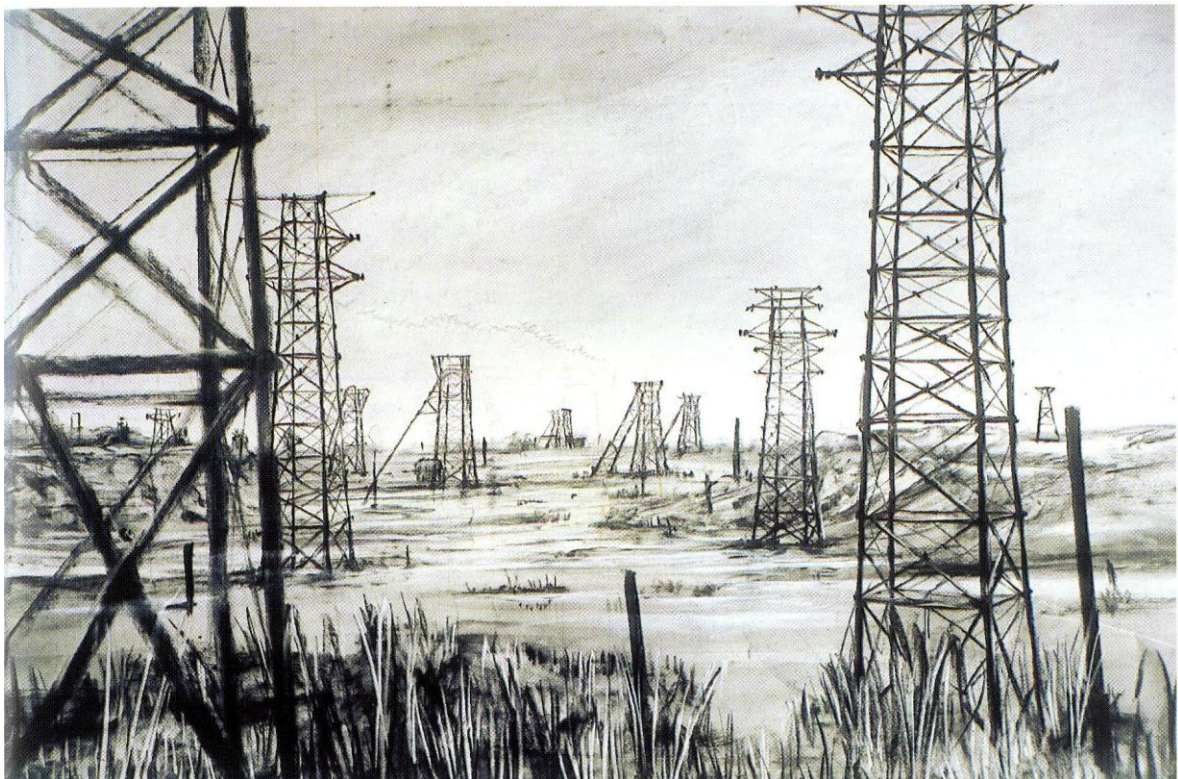


Figure 9.35 Drawing from *WEIGHING ... and WANTING* (Christov-Bakargiev 1998:137).



Figure 9.36 Black and white photograph (1986) David Goldblatt's *Lifetimes: Under Apartheid* (Cameron, Christov-Bakargiev and Coetzee 1999:49).



Figure 9.37 Drawing from *History of the Main Complaint* (Cameron, Christov-Bakargiev and Coetzee 1999: 124).



Figure 9.38 Drawing from *Felix in Exile* (Benezra, Boris, Cooke, Sitas and Cameron 2001:32).



Figure 9.39 Drawing from *Sobriety, Obesity & Growing Old* (Godby 1992:unpaginated).



Figure 9.40 Drawing from *Felix in Exile* (Benezra, Boris, Cooke, Sitas and Cameron 2001:97).

Symbolic landscapes, places of geography, monuments etcetera, are often specifically besieged with the intent / idea of devastating and annihilating identities. There are numerous accounts of mosques in Iraq, Palestine and Kosovo that have been attacked in this way; Buddhist statues in Afghanistan were targeted by the Taliban; churches in Macedonia were also beleaguered. Of course the most famous recent examples of such identicide / urbicide (the reverse of identity construction) are the attacks on the United States of America's World Trade Centre and the Pentagon. The decimation of the WTC has left a shallow imprint regarded as "shadow ground" of landscapes of calamity and violence (Berman 1996; Foote

1997; Neal 1998; Maharg 1999; Porteous 1989). Other examples include the remnants of the death and concentration camps in Europe and the Japanese internment camps of World War II.

What is the effect of history, particularly the history of industrial capitalism, on the physical landscape? How do these changes in the landscape affect our memories of the past? What of the nature of memory and memorialisation in the films? The ephemeral personal memories of those who suffered from apartheid are often set against the bulky physical monuments erected (both deliberately and inadvertently) by those who benefited from it. Individuals are a resource, and an expendable one at that. This idea is central to *Felix in Exile*.

David Harvey's book, *Justice, Nature & the Geography of Difference* (1996) introduces one to the concept of "embeddedness" which refers to the dialectic between nature and society. Referring to the use of cats, fish, hyenas and other animals in Kentridge's *Drawings for Projection* series, Godby proposes that the animals "appear to revolt against [social] abomination of nature" (1990:104), and points out that Kentridge's use of "animals as symbols of nature [is] in contrast to the perverted state of the prevailing social order" (1990:112; see *Figure 9.40*). That is, capitalists such as Soho Eckstein, who represents the dominant social order, control nature (and people who are seen as an extension of nature) to their own ends. In *Mine*, for instance, Soho Eckstein's bed / office desk becomes littered with ticker tape papers from an accounting machine — and includes mine

workers as part of the waste and a part of the scene of a mine dump — industrial and environmental waste juxtaposed with a rhinoceros which represents nature in direct opposition to environmental decay and devastation. As previously mentioned, Soho Eckstein clears his bed / office desk with one sweep of his arm, knocking everything off to allow him to play with his new pet project — the rhinoceros. However, as Soho Eckstein plays with his new pet, one gains the impression that this rhinoceros is simply a new acquisition, to be discarded at will — once Soho Eckstein has tired of playing with it. Another example of embeddedness relates to Kentridge's Jewish origins. In World War II, when the Germans knew that the Allies were getting very close to one of their death camps, Auschwitz, they tried to get rid of the evidence that the place was specifically a death camp. They dismantled the "showers" and the ovens. They levelled the dormitories, scattered the ashes and forced the remaining Jews and other inmates to walk to another camp. Today, very little exists of the original camp — it is mainly flat ground, with a few sign posts. However, according to an oral legend, no living animal will go near that ground. It is completely deserted and silent. It has been reported that birds that fly over that land, do so silently. Society, or rather individuals, through their deaths, have permeated the landscape, inhabited, or become embedded in the land — and their permeation has changed the landscape so drastically that in one case, that of Auschwitz, no living animal will be found on it (Kentridge cited in Christov-Bakargiev 1998). The oral legend is also significant in that it tells one about a human desire to have nature as witness to culture — to have a nature that is outside culture / history as an objective source of meaning.



Figure 9.41 Drawing from *Sobriety, Obesity & Growing Old* (Christov-Bakargiev 1998:71).

What is particularly interesting about *Felix in Exile* is that history here also takes on a different meaning. The black female protagonist measures and marks the land,

through the use of a land surveyor (theodolite), but her land marks are people — dead people. The associations of the use of a theodolite are fascinating. The original use of a theodolite as a Western product of technology is to demarcate and cut up the land in straight linear marks — (re)allocating indigenous land or land sold to the colonialists (pitiful amounts for most usually the land was simply appropriated for colonial use). Nandi, as the first image of post-colonialism in William Kentridge's series of films, is using the theodolite in an anti-Western way. She marks the human landscapes and brings to the fore the negativity of such earlier colonial demarcations and the effect they had on the peoples already living here. It is also a reference to forced removals, a popular tactic of the apartheid political and social machinery. Nandi challenges the use of Western technology, giving it an organic, natural reference. In mapping out the night sky / space she seems to imply the arrogance and greed in attempting to claim natural landscapes that belong to everyone (see *Figure 9.41*). At the very least, by association she makes a comparison between the ridiculous idea of owning the sky and the indigenous peoples who believed that everyone who lived on the land had a right to do so — in other words, the land was not “owned” by anyone. In doing so she questions technology as a by-product of the Enlightenment. The victims' bodies are transformed into landmarks, absorbed into the landscape, staining the landscape with their blood — history, memory and the land are being re-claimed / re-written. Individuals and the land are important, not material things or products, as proclaimed by capitalists. This is ideological.



Figure 9.42 Drawing from *Felix in Exile* (Benezra, Boris, Cooke, Sitas and Cameron 2001: 96).

Many cultures are nomadic, and the transportable goods and animals become tokens of migrancy and the well-being associated with movement. The relationship between people and the land is sacrosanct — a sanctity that has been defiled by colonialism, imperialism, capitalism and apartheid. Many who have a deep attachment to the physical land are not born there, and their identity with regard to the land is via an idea and an ideal — which raises the following question: in what

way does such a relationship develop? Consider for example, Jews and their belief in Israel, or African Americans and their attachment to Africa — even though they might never have been there, they are very attached to what they believe is their homeland.

A fascinating example of individuals and their association / relationship to their homeland, and the connectedness of land and collective memory, is the firebombing of Dresden. The almost complete destruction of Dresden during WWII when it was firebombed by the Allies, has, according to W. G. Sebald, barely left

a trace of pain behind in the collective consciousness, it has been largely obliterated from the retrospective understanding of those affected, and it never played any appreciable part in the discussion of the internal constitution of our country (2003:4).

The devastation of Dresden required a superhuman strength to reconstruct what little was left. The Germans proceeded though, while entering into a conspiracy of silence, not looking back, but looking only to the future. This conspiracy of silence, a form of individual and collective amnesia, was probably a preconscious form of self censorship. There was indeed an agreement that the real material and moral ruin of Germany was not to be exposed or even acknowledged, rather hidden away — a shameful family secret (Sebald 2003). The focus of this chapter now turns to William Kentridge's portrayal of cities in his art works.

9.2 Cities

William Kentridge's works have a haunting view of the city as both a catastrophic and beautiful site. For instance, within Johannesburg there are areas such as Bertrams, Hillbrow and Berea which are decrepit and literally falling apart. Then there is the beauty of the Highveld landscape surrounding Johannesburg, juxtaposed with industrial waste, environmental waste and the mine dumps. All this is in turn combined with surrealistic images of nature, such as the rhinoceros on Soho Eckstein's bed in *Mine*. In *Felix in Exile* and *Mine* one finds images of the Johannesburg Highveld, this is beautiful and stark in comparison to the inner decay of the mine dumps. In the latter film, *Mine*, one finds beautiful open spaces in direct comparison with the claustrophobic mines. The films provide a sense of living on the edge between violence and seduction, between ecstasy and decay (see Figures 9.43 — 9.45). The same can be said of Kentridge's plays *Faustus in Africa!* and *Woyzeck on the Highveld*.



Figure 9.43 A black and white photograph: South African Landscape (Christov-Bakargiev 1998:26).



Figure 9.44 Photograph: David Goldblatt: *Lifetimes: Under Apartheid* (1986) (Cameron, Christov-Bakargiev and Coetzee 1999:49).



Figure 9.45 Drawing from *Sobriety, Obesity & Growing Old* (Christov-Bakargiev 1998:11).

Included in David Harvey's *The Condition of Postmodernity* (1993) is Jonathan Raban's *Soft City*, an intensely personal rendition of London in the early 1970s (first published in 1974). Most writers at that time saw cities as highly automated and rationalised systems of mass production and consumerism, while Raban in fact saw the city as being about the production of "signs and images" (cited in Harvey 1993:5). Rather than a linear structure, Raban wrote that cities were like theatre productions containing individuals capable of many different roles. Raban's city theatre presents itself as a stage whereupon individuals act out their lives. The city, according to Raban, is "irrational, chaotic, ephemeral, and ever-changing" — much too complex a space ever to be disciplined by authoritarians and bureaucrats. "A labyrinth, an encyclopaedia, an emporium, a theatre", the city is a

space where fact, imagination and fantasy have amalgamated (cited in Harvey 1993:5).

Also according to Raban “[p]ersonal identity had been rendered soft, fluid, endlessly open to the exercise of the will and the imagination” (cited in Harvey 1993:5). He writes that one’s individualism has an effect on cities, which are essentially spaces that attempt to meld themselves to that individualism. The relationship between city and individual is a dynamic one, ever-changing and reforming. Raban thus sees

that living in a city is an art, and we need the vocabulary of art, of style, to describe the peculiar relation between man and material that exists in the continual creative play of urban living. The city as we can imagine it, the soft city of illusion, myth, aspiration, nightmare, is as real, and maybe more real, than the hard city one can locate in maps and statistics, in monographs on urban sociology and demography and architecture (cited in Harvey 1993:5).

If one looks at Johannesburg as a text, then how much is planned and how much is self-creating? In Kentridge’s film, *Johannesburg, 2nd Greatest City after Paris*, the city is literally text — the name of the city is typed or drawn in, the writing slowly dissolves to make way for the city as city — roads / highways buildings and so on, while traces of the name remain. Consider this: is Johannesburg more planned than most cities? There is the deliberate change of the landscape (physical city) and deliberate social engineering (reflected in the physical city - the townships and hostels) with unimagined consequences (apartheid and the resistance to apartheid). The Johannesburg landscape has been created by humans, and also, accidentally, stands as a record of industrial capitalism in the last one hundred

years. As a result, there have been deliberate and inadvertent monuments — the machinery and mine dumps. It has been industrial capitalism's version of history / truth that has marked South Africa's land. Is Kentridge's work planned or unplanned? His initial starting point is planned, but his work has unforeseen consequences in that it develops without his knowing exactly what will come next.

The city is the ultimate human artefact — it has a life of its own. Humans set it in motion but cannot control its final destiny. Kentridge's work is a private landscape on paper and then on film, following this same individual process of development as the city. It reflects the preconscious as the city reflects the collective unconscious — his work mirrors the city — his own internal landscape. In *Johannesburg, 2nd Greatest City after Paris*, the city of Johannesburg is spread out in front of a naked Felix Teitlebaum, emblazoned with the caption, "captive of the city". The highways, roads and buildings collapse and are rebuilt in different versions. The images conjure up concrete slabs, steel beams, and tarred roads. It is almost as if Kentridge is surveying his land objectively — internalising it. With the films *Monument* and *Mine* the city takes on a different perspective with the darker side of a city made up of dispensable labourers, reflecting a collective unconscious. In *Felix in Exile* the focus is on the bare, dry abandoned landscape, and *History of the Main Complaint* has Soho/Felix driving along a long winding round, assuming it is the countryside — further away from Johannesburg. In *Tide Table*, the final film in the *Drawings for Projection* series, Soho/Felix is at the beach — far away from the city of Johannesburg. It raises the question of whether or not

Kentridge has finally been freed from that city — not in exile, not in conflict with himself or the city, but at rest. His internal landscape reaches even further, severing ties with Johannesburg (and by association South Africa) completely with his innovative *Black Box / Chambre Noir* and *Magic Flute* productions, as well as his production of *WHAT WILL COME (HAS ALREADY COME)* and pre-production of the Shostakovich opera *The Nose*, whose subject matter is the rise of Stalinism in the Soviet Union.

The synthesis of representations of both body and city has been documented from very early on. Vitruvius¹ a Roman engineer and architect, wrote a set of books (his most famous being *On Architecture*) that focus on the design and building of temples. He observed that in some cases the outstretched limbs of a man serve to encompass the circle and the square. This reference serves to encourage the creation of buildings that “display the same harmonious relation of parts to whole as Vitruvius found in the human form. The body is not simply that which is to be contained by a building, the body *contains* the very generating principle of the building” (Burgin 1996:141). The human form is seen not only as the origin of a building but of the entire built environment. Françoise Choay refers to the writings of Leon Battista Alberti (1404 — 1472), an architect-theorist of the Italian Renaissance, who writes that “the city is like a large house and the house is like a small city,” but more significantly, “every edifice is a body” (cited in Burgin 1996:141).

¹ Marcus Vitruvius Pollio born c. 80—70BC, died c. 15BC.

Keith Basso posits that self-awareness / knowledge cannot be (re)constructed without place-worlds:

[i]f place-making is a way of constructing the past, a venerable means of *doing* history, it is also a way of constructing social traditions and, in the process, personal and social identities. We *are*, in a sense, the place-worlds we imagine (1996:7).

There is no innate identity to places; rather it is human actions that construct identity in reaction to places (Osborne 2001). Monuments, streets, etcetera are material / physical constructs, but they evoke explicit meaning and provide spatial coordinates of identity (Lynch 1972). Things / constructs are often associated with society/ies through repetitive ritualised performances and commemorations. In other words, there is often a continuous complimentary relationship between individuals and the places / spaces that they inhabit. Individuals therefore construct places and they take their identities from them: “people are constituted through place” (Osborne 2001:5). For instance, the elision of the WTC not only represented fear and grief for the enormity of loss of human lives, but also represented disorientation and bewilderment at the loss of such a visible and easily identifiable landmark. Interaction between place and experience is not always a positive one. There are also negative impacts on individuals and such places can evoke alienation and ambivalence. This again raises the concept of the “shadowed ground” of negative remembrances (Cresswell 1996; Foote 1997; Neal 1998; Osborne 2001; Shields 1991). Physical constructs are ideologically constructed and Richard Schein refers to them as “discourse materialized” (1997:662). Thus, as society/ies evolve/s and change/s so do the places

themselves transform into “dynamic and reflexive sites of innovation” (Massey 1995:182).

The constant connection of individuals with their lived-in spaces strengthens their recognition and identification with time, place and one another. Dislocation, or forced removals, from such places elides / severs the physical and spiritual connectedness of individuals. Of course industrialisation, bringing with it capitalism, imperialism and colonialism, has impacted on individual’s lives and their lived-in spaces:

[w]e live in a dynamic and complex culture in which experiences, memories, and stories are not necessarily shared by others, so that one person’s associations with place, though intense, may not be culturally reinforced. We also encourage a view of ourselves in the world that is more abstract and detached. When this is coupled with a dynamic and mobile social system, places become thinned out and merge with space (Sack 1997:138).

An example of forced removals during the apartheid era is to be found in District Six. *The District Six Museum* has a seven metre by seven metre laminated map of the area covering the floor of the museum. This map is an attempt to reclaim the city with all its old names and places. This is similar to Kentridge’s incorporation of actual found maps in his prints and miniature theatre production *Black Box / Chambre Noir*, and his tapestries; see *Figures 9.46 — 9.55*. (Also see Anselm Kiefer’s similar works *Figures 9.56 — 9.59*.)



Figure 9.46 William Kentridge: untitled study for tapestry (Basualdo 2007:28). *Chine collé* and collage.

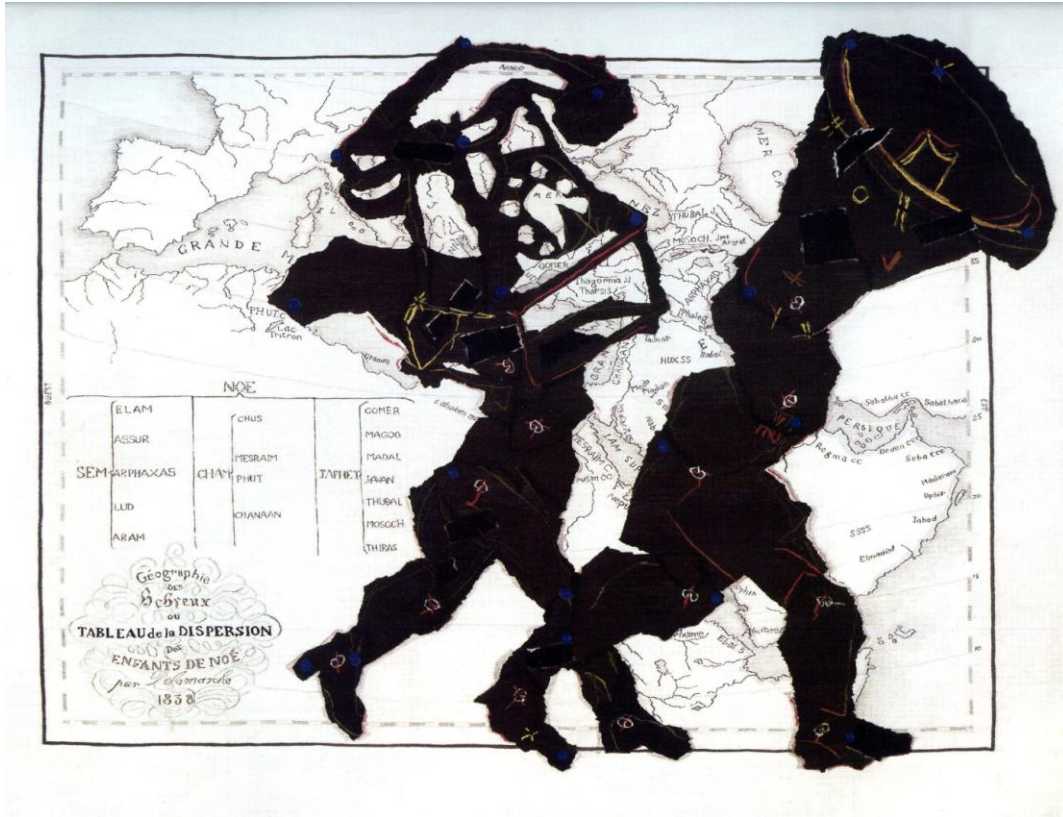


Figure 9.47 William Kentridge Porter series: *Géographie de hebreux ou Tableau de la dispersion des Enfants de Noë* (2005) (Basualdo 2007:84). A tapestry weave with embroidery.

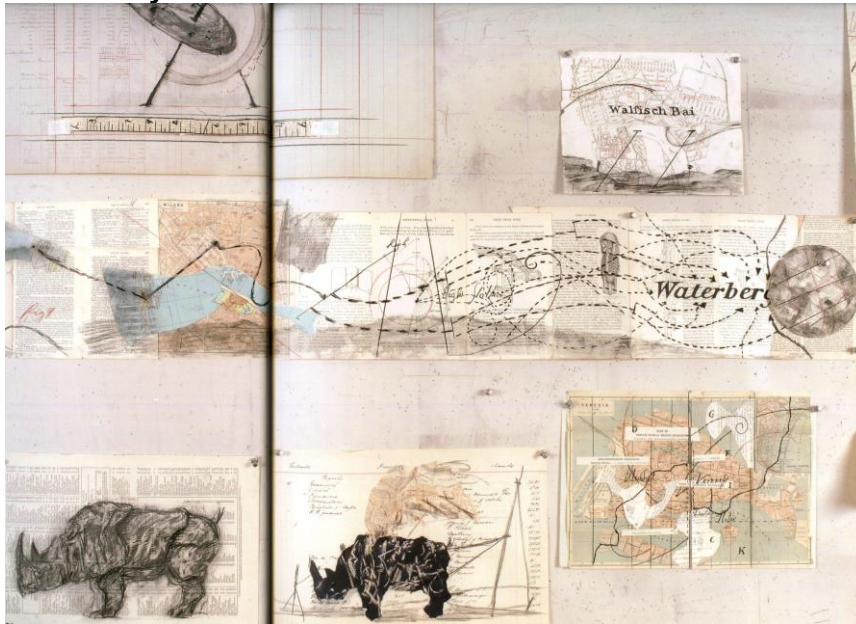


Figure 9.48 Studio installation of drawings for *Black Box / Chambre Noir* (Law-Viljoen 2007c:36-37).

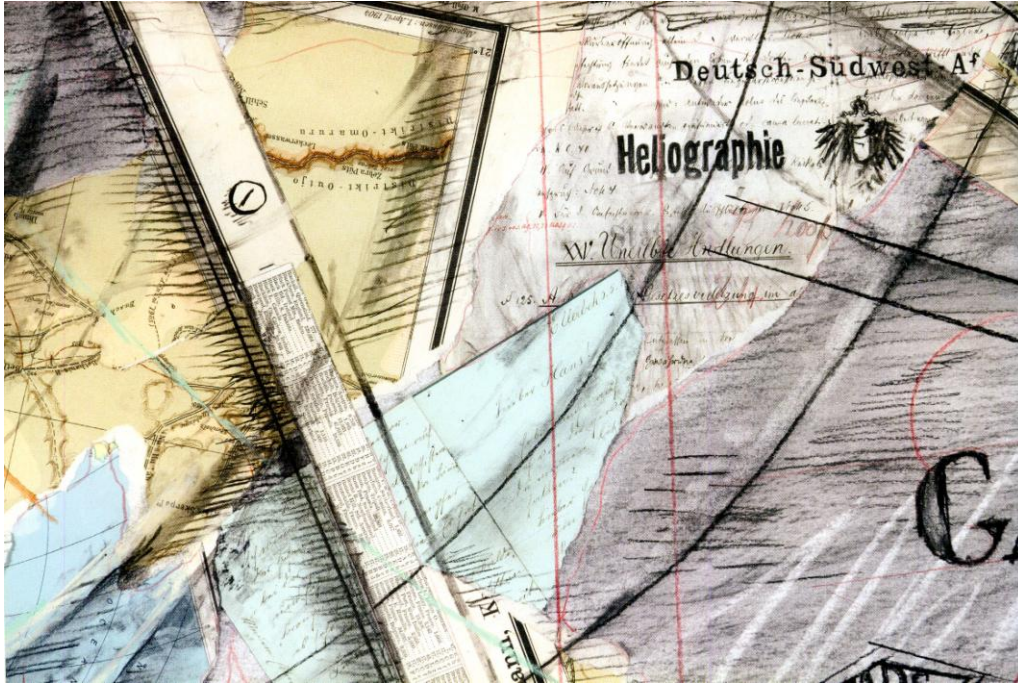


Figure 9.49 Drawing from *Black Box / Chambre Noir* (from *Flute* edited by Law Viljoen 2007b:156).

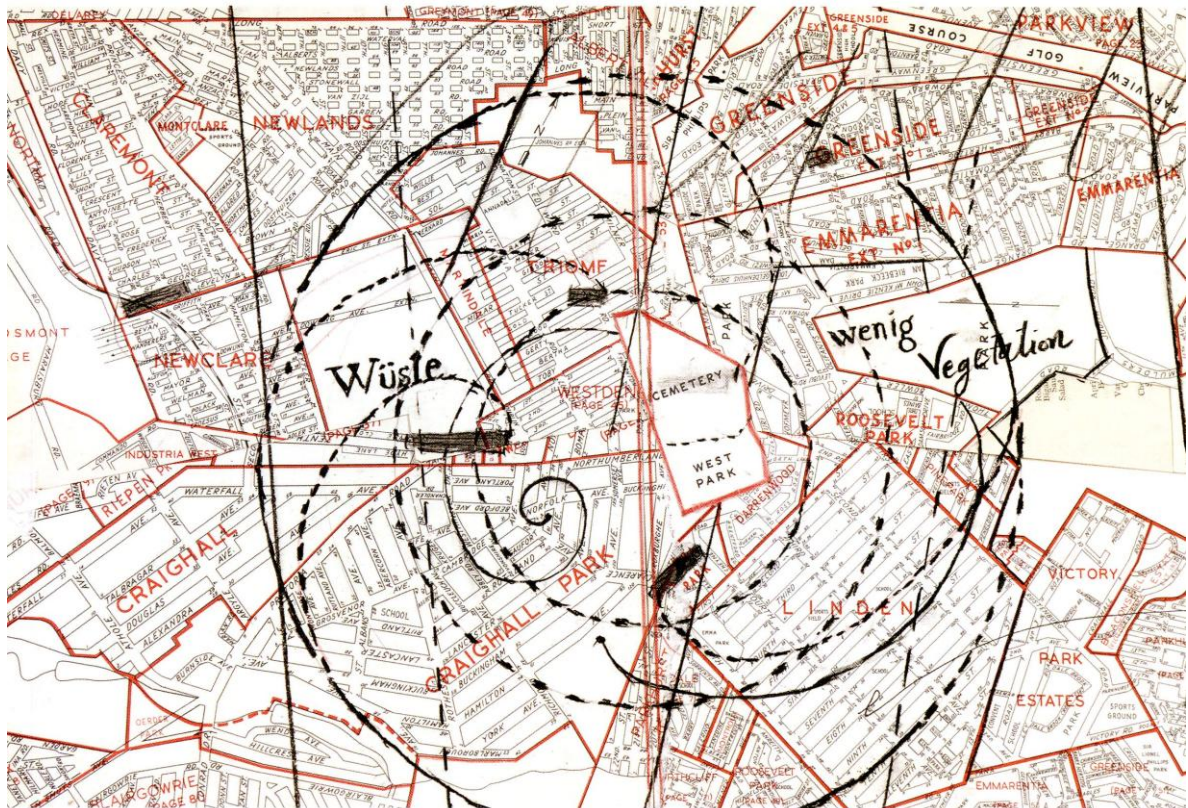


Figure 9.50 Drawing from *Black Box / Chambre Noir* (from *Flute* edited by Law Viljoen 2007b:174).



Figure 9.51 Photograph of *Black Box / Chambre Noir* (from *Flute* edited by Law-Viljoen 2007b:175).

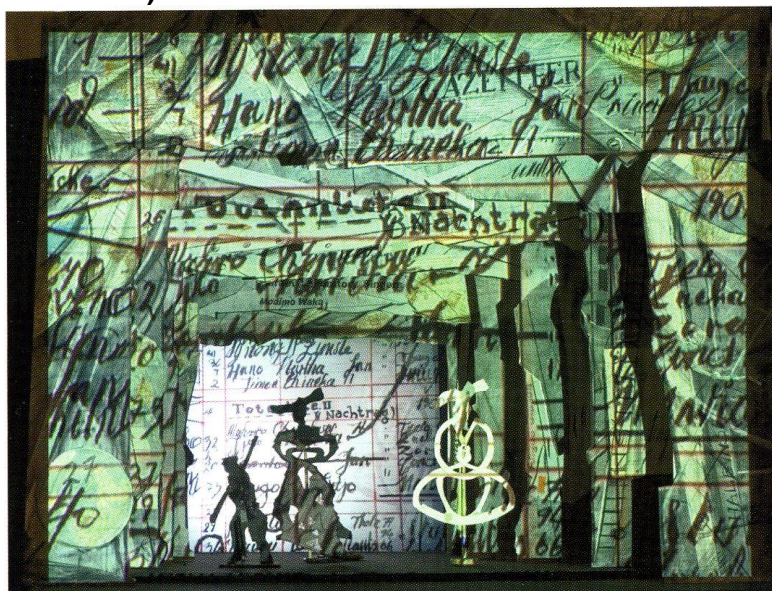


Figure 9.52 Photograph of *Black Box / Chambre Noir* (from *Flute* edited by Law-Viljoen 2007b:185).

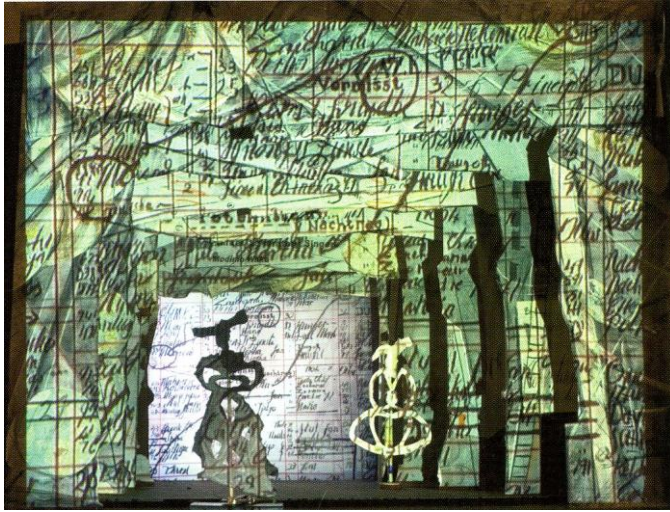


Figure 9.53 Photograph of *Black Box / Chambre Noir* (from *Flute* edited by Law-Viljoen 2007b:185).



Figure 9.54 Photograph of *Black Box / Chambre Noir* (from *Flute* edited by Law-Viljoen 2007b:186).

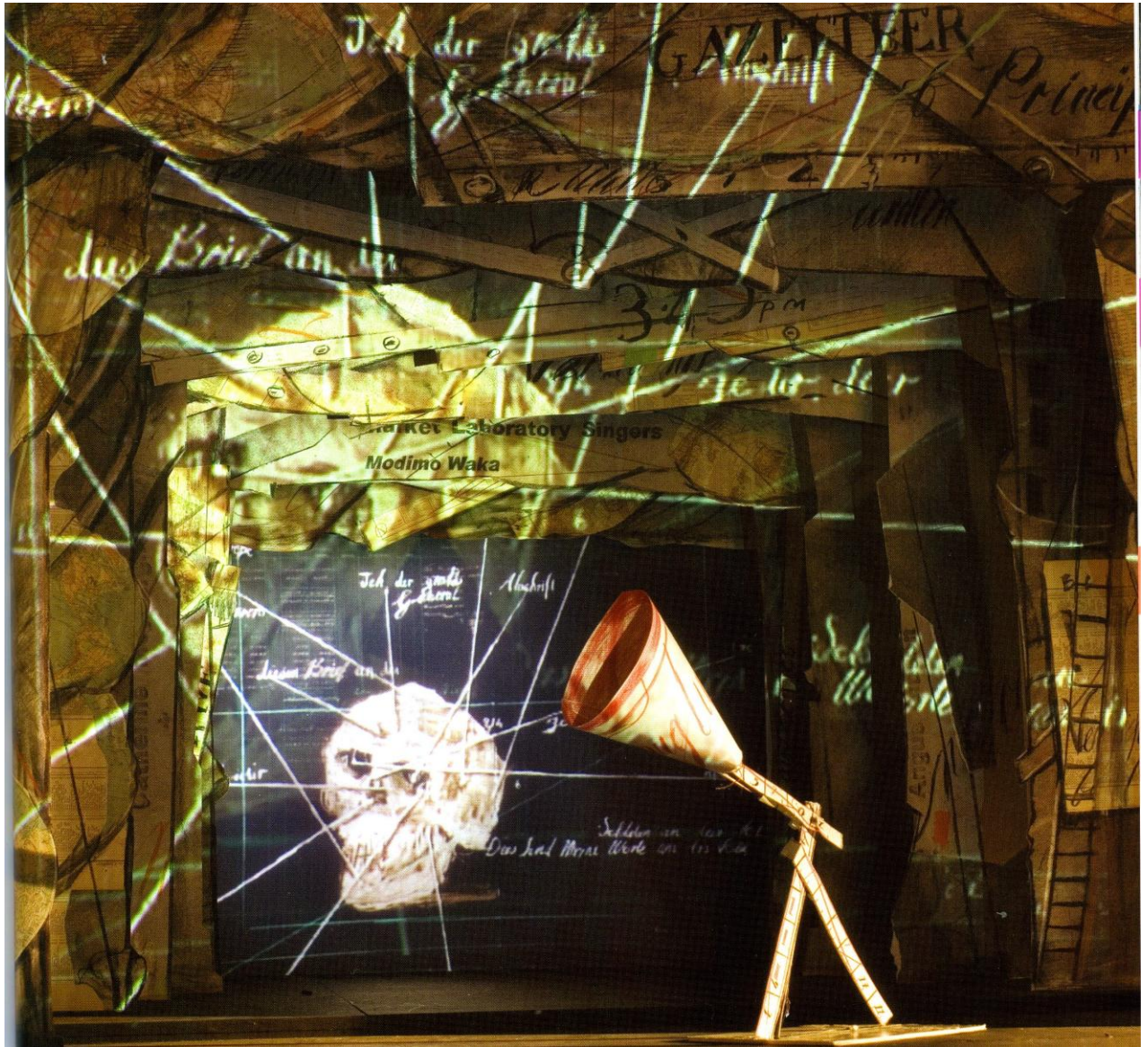


Figure 9.55 Photograph of *Black Box / Chambre Noir* (from *Flute* edited by Law-Viljoen 2007b:165).



Figure 9.56 *Starfall* (1998) Anselm Kiefer, emulsion, acrylic, shellac on canvas with broken glass (Latterwein 2007:171).



Figure 9.57 *Starfall* (1998) Anselm Kiefer, emulsion, acrylic, shellac on canvas with broken glass (Latterwein 2007:172).

“Frozen time” is often the description given to architecture. Victor Burgin suggests that national monuments are the accumulation of national history. Furthermore, he posits that where none exist, national identity is delicate. He refers to an Albanian, located in the predominantly Albanian south of Serbia who laments: “I know we have been here the whole time, fine. I know that. But you can see the Roman baths, the Turkish mosques, and the Serbian monasteries. Where are our buildings?” (cited in Burgin 1996:140). From this lament Burgin deduces that where there are national monuments, which somehow are destroyed, this in turn erases national identity. Bosnian-Serb “ethnic cleansing” did not only consist of annihilating ethnicities found to be undesirable, it also included the destruction of the undesirable’s historic / ancient mosques. An example of this eradication included the obliteration of the Ferhad-Pasha Mosque, dating from 1583 (Ottoman period). This mosque was considered to be the most exquisite of all mosques found in the Balkans. A bridge in Mostar was also eradicated — destroyed after existing for four centuries. According to Burgin (1996) and Kinzer (1993) this bridge represented the common and integrated life of Muslims, Croats, and Serbs before the violent degeneration of Yugoslavia into ethnic mini states. A Belgrade architect quoted in the *New York Times* commented: “[t]he bridge was a piece of metaphysical architecture that linked cultures and people”, he concludes by stating “I ask myself how the people of Mostar will live without that bridge. They have now lost a part of their being. With a loss like this, people will lose their place in time” (Sudetic 1993:A7).

Individuals' identification with certain places is often emotive. These places become iconic and are often even empowered by the specific cultivation / development of linked mythologies (Osborne 2001). Through this, places and landscapes within the physical world become filled with symbolically-loaded sites and even silences that add to collective memory/ies and provide spatio-temporal reference points for society/ies (Fogelson 1989; Harootunian 1988; Osborne 1994, 1996 and 2001). Individuals occupy space and live in places and identify with them, or alternatively are completely alienated by them.

For Robert Kolker (2005), there is the concept of “cultural schizophrenia”, which he has phrased. This is a schizophrenia that one assumes to refer to divides between worlds or different cultures. One can experience this cultural schizophrenia quite palpably in South Africa. One merely has to visit a township like that of Alexandra or Soweto and then visit the mostly white suburbs, such as Sandton or Stellenbosch, to be thrown into a vortex of difference — different lifestyles, races, and values. Take for instance the difference between Soho Eckstein's bed and the innards of the mine dumps and hostels / dormitories in *Mine*. In this film the screen is split horizontally between the underground and the world above, showing divided lives, divided cultures and divided existences. (Compare this to the vertically split screen used to similar effect in *Stereoscope*.) If one was to travel between these two places one would experience a sense of surrealism or difference - the worlds so different it is difficult to believe that they exist simultaneously, and in some cases mere kilometres away from one another. Kentridge has stated

[t]hroughout my life there has been a sense of the comfortable internal living inside the spaces where one lives and the awareness of chaotic desperate lives outside. [The films are a] heightened awareness of that anomaly” (Oppelt 1999:6).

In *Johannesburg, 2nd Greatest City after Paris*, there is the image of Soho Eckstein feeding the poor — him at a banquet table literally hurling food at the poor masses and a poor hobo “Harry” (Godby 1992:unpaginated). There is a stark contrast between the haves and the have-nots. The miner’s faces are lined with pain and the hardships they have endured — while Soho Eckstein’s face is gelatinous and flabby, representing extreme excess. The film then moves on to Felix Teitlebaum and Soho Eckstein brawling — the images change to a bare landscape with a shelf-like apparatus filled with macabre images of severed heads. Mrs. Soho Eckstein walks out from behind this shelf of heads with a towel over her shoulder, nonchalantly as if going for a swim, but then her towel morphs into a big fish and the macabre images are erased. In a more banal and domestic / suburban scene Felix Teitlebaum and Soho Eckstein fight it out again and Felix Teitlebaum wins. The masses of workers are also seen as victorious. Felix Teitlebaum represents the fight of the oppressed against the oppressors of this world — the difference between the haves and the have-nots and in Felix Teitlebaum’s mind, or in Kentridge’s mind, the land and the spoils belong to the voiceless, the unempowered, the proletariat. But this is an unrealistic utopian vision of Kentridge’s, as this is not how things are in the real world. This scene and the one before are examples of the cultural schizophrenia to which Robert Kolker refers (2005).

Kentridge's films accentuate the presence of industrialisation, in the design of drawings and the post-industrial decay. The future / present shows schizoid signs of burnout, waste, excess and discharge. It represents the development of today's society as a catastrophic site. Highways and buildings — a phantasmagoria of glass and stone, layer into one another. With little light on ground level, the deep shadows and the black shapes, colours and contours evoke a mood of decay, despair and doom. The streets are covered with detritus, wreckage, refuse, and are slick with wetness and traces of effluence, poisoning the landscape and sky. This excrement is a result of the accelerated time process to which industrialisation aspires — it is a society in which the dominant tradition is that of rapid replacement: novelty is the very staple of the consumer society and rapidly becomes its waste. With Kentridge's work, there are the effects of industrialisation — mine workers, mine dumps, greed and exploitation. Soho Eckstein is the ultimate result of an industrial society — a gluttonous, greedy exploitative capitalist. There is also the merging of the Third World with the First world, what Umberto Eco refers to as the "medievalisation of the city" (cited Smart 1993:30), a process that turns the city into a ghettoised and fragmented place. In South Africa this is particularly true — next to the high-priced, exclusive suburb of Sandton (first world), you have the ghetto of Alexandra (third world), and further fragmentation occurs through the use of razor wire and electric fences to keep the third world at bay (evident in *Johannesburg, 2nd Greatest City after Paris*).

This rampant industrialisation results in a society characterised by money and power, and controlled by a small core of people represented perfectly by Soho Eckstein, the fat-cat capitalist. (Yet, when Felix Teitlebaum and Soho Eckstein become one and the same character, in his sixth film, Kentridge seems to be at pains to veer away from the stereotype of the greedy capitalist, and rather depicts the morphed character of Soho/Felix as a complex, three-dimensional character of lived and personal experiences). Everywhere, there is an overwhelming sense of psychosis, pathos and degeneration. This is evident in the Babel-like (consider that South Africa has eleven official languages) world of dispossessed people who roam the streets — here everything is a matter of cancelled identities which reflects indifference. These cancelled identities contrast distinctively with the nobility of Felix Teitlebaum who is represented as pure and unmaterialistic, and Soho Eckstein, fat and oleaginous. Felix Teitlebaum is depicted as one at odds with autocracy — a revolutionary — someone who romantically and idealistically believes that water could / can cleanse the world of all decay and waste; and a romantic idealist who loves Mrs. Soho Eckstein despite their barriers. Disused mines, discarded machinery and mine dumps are cultural and industrial landmarks that have marked the land and the people that have been exploited — people who have been used, replaced, and eventually disposed of. Post-industrialisation and technology are associated specifically with loss and salvage. Technology in a post-industrial society is seen as unnatural and a violent intervention into nature as a resource for capital gains. The traditional boundaries between the city / suburbs or centre, and the countryside or periphery, are “displaced into a semi-urban

landscape depiction penetrated by the technologies of capital, exploitation, industrialisation, the media” (Kapitza-Meyer 1994:66). The distinction is no longer clear — industrialisation has crossed over into suburbia and vice-versa. Moreover, technology has not only been used to plunder the land, but as *Johannesburg, 2nd Greatest City after Paris* suggests, technology was also the means by which apartheid plundered the people of their lives and of their rights. In one scene in *Johannesburg, 2nd Greatest City after Paris*, the shelf-like drawing that holds decapitated heads is similar to a large still drawing of Kentridge’s, called *Casspirs Full of Love* (sic; 1989; see Figure 9.60). The two drawings depict individuals who have been subjected to state violence. The title itself is rather ironic, as it is taken from transmitted radio messages of mothers to their sons serving in the army during apartheid: “*from Mum, with Casspirs full of love*” (sic; Cameron, Christov-Bakargiev & Coetzee 1999:50). Casspirs represent technology in its most violent form — armoured vehicles filled with soldiers to crush opposition by any means possible — including the use of extreme violence. Of course they are emblematic of apartheid itself, given the conspicuous and constant presence in townships. Apartheid technology also included tear gas, guns, and inhuman methods of torture such as repeated electric shocks.



Figure 9.60 Drawing *Casspirs Full of Love* (sic; Stewart 2006:37).

Phenomenological preservation of past states is mainly determined by history and/or individuals' perceptions of themselves within history, through individuals,

places/sites and differing views of ethics and intentions (Bloch 1989; Bloch 1996:217). This is especially true of Kentridge. Soho/Felix represents both a personal and collective history — his sense of guilt, remorse and responsibility is expressed as he sees himself (projected through his character) within the history of South Africa.

Writing specifically about Kentridge's prints, Kay Wilson encapsulates an ever-present theme of his:

[a]ll around Johannesburg, what initially appear to be “mountains” are in fact heaps of debris left by mining companies while the ground underlining the periphery is subject to frequent collapse. A contemporary website for the city's real estate development explains without irony that in the 1960s the gold mines surrounding Johannesburg were depleted and that the mining company looked to further value in the land and in 1968 a Properties arm was established with Rand Mines (the overall owner) to plan, proclaim, and market the now disused mining land (2006:18).

William Kentridge's landscape prints directly address this process of stripping, depleting, and commercialising the space of nature. He engraves the landscape over the pages of the Rand Mine ledger book from 1910 and inscribes other landscapes with superimposed surveyor's marks (see *Figures 9.61 — 9.68*). “Euphemism characterizes human suffering as well as the ruined landscape” (Wilson 2006:18). “Monuments” as they occur in Kentridge's works, constitute the last theme explored in this chapter.

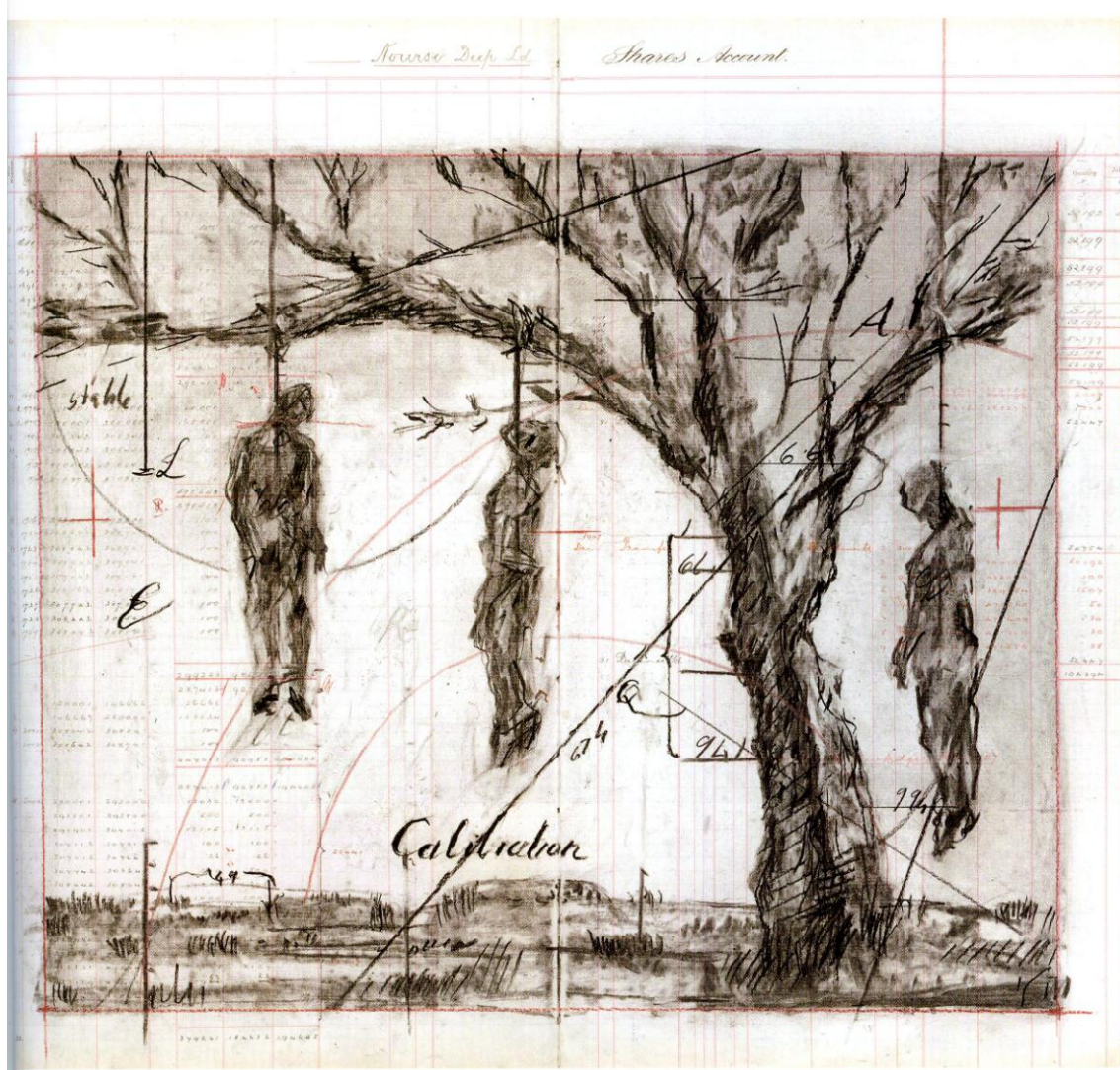


Figure 9.61 Drawing from *Black Box / Chambre Noir* (edited by Law-Viljoen 2007a:unpaginated).

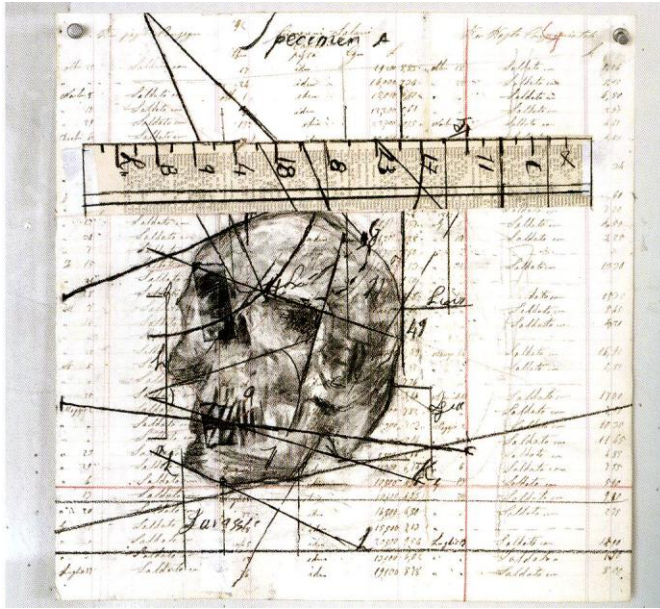


Figure 9.62 Drawing from *Black Box / Chambre Noir* (edited by Law-Viljoen 2007a:unpaginated).

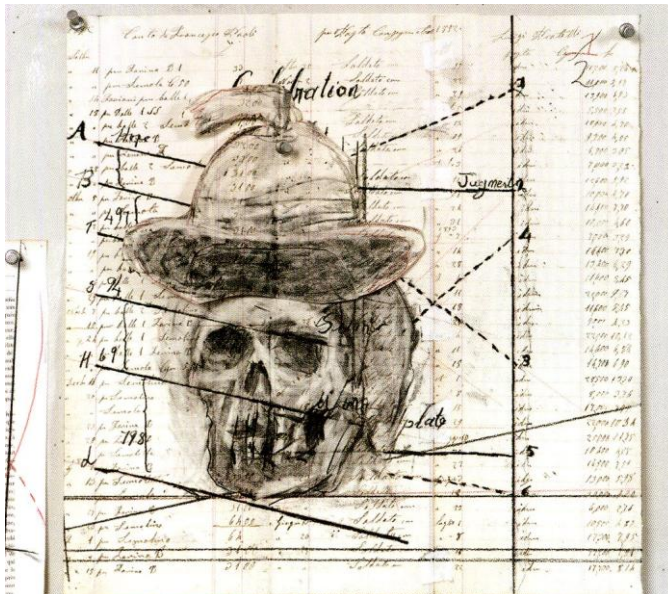


Figure 9.63 Drawing from *Black Box / Chambre Noir* (edited by Law-Viljoen 2007a:unpaginated).

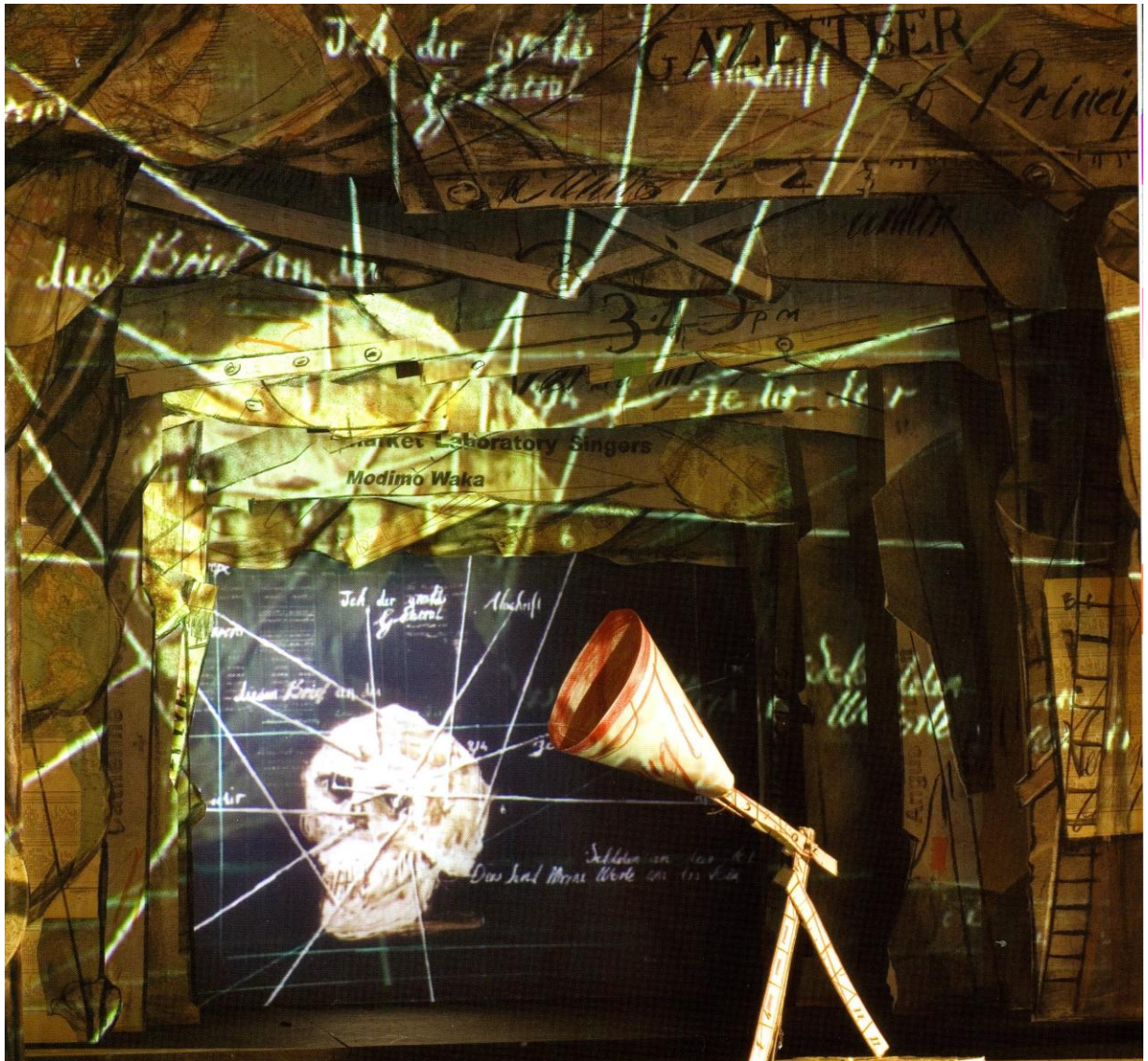


Figure 9.64 Photograph of *Black Box / Chambre Noir* (edited by Law-Viljoen 2007a:unpaginated).

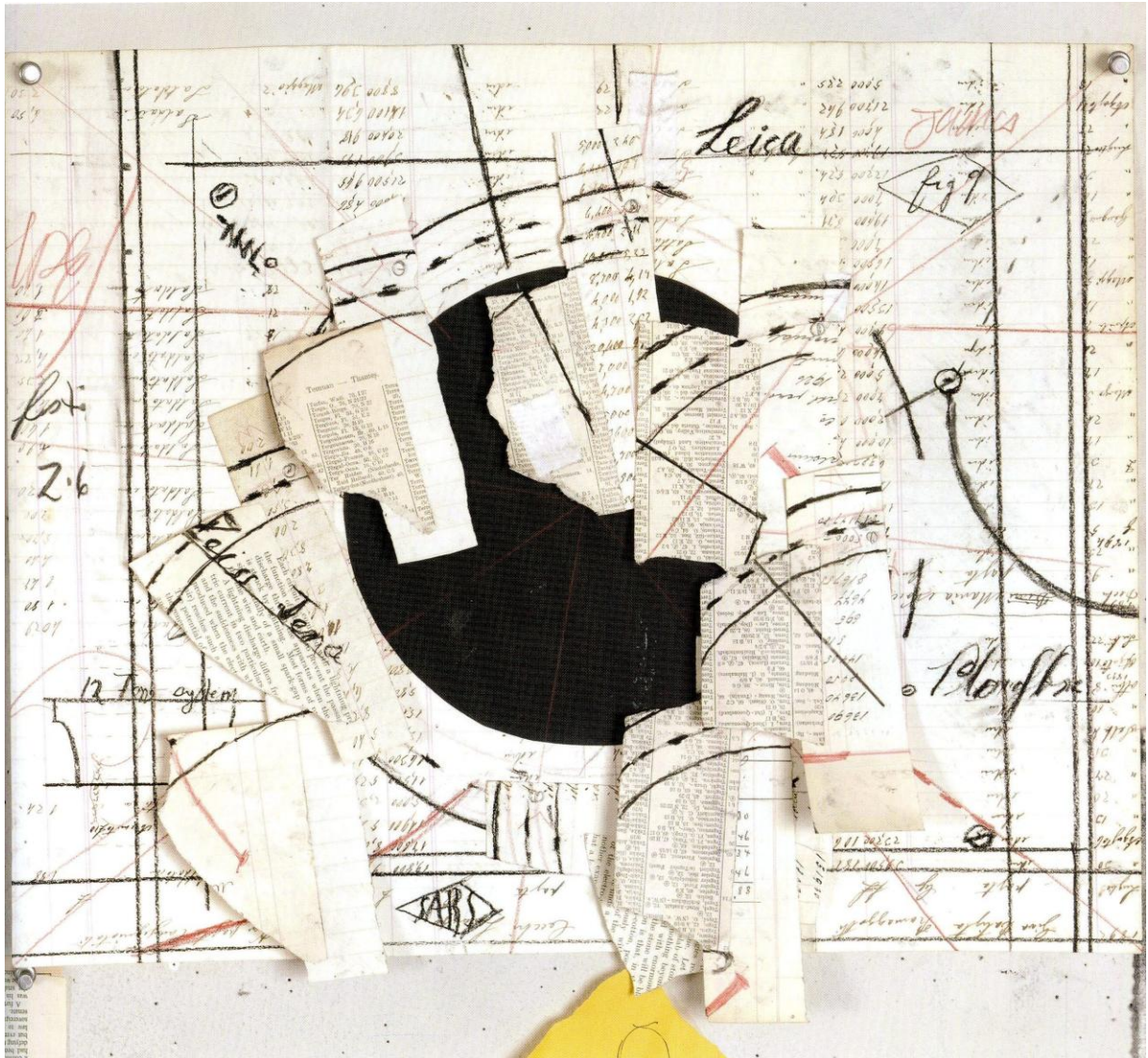


Figure 9.65 Drawing from *Black Box / Chambre Noir* (from *Flute* edited by Law-Viljoen 2007b:181).

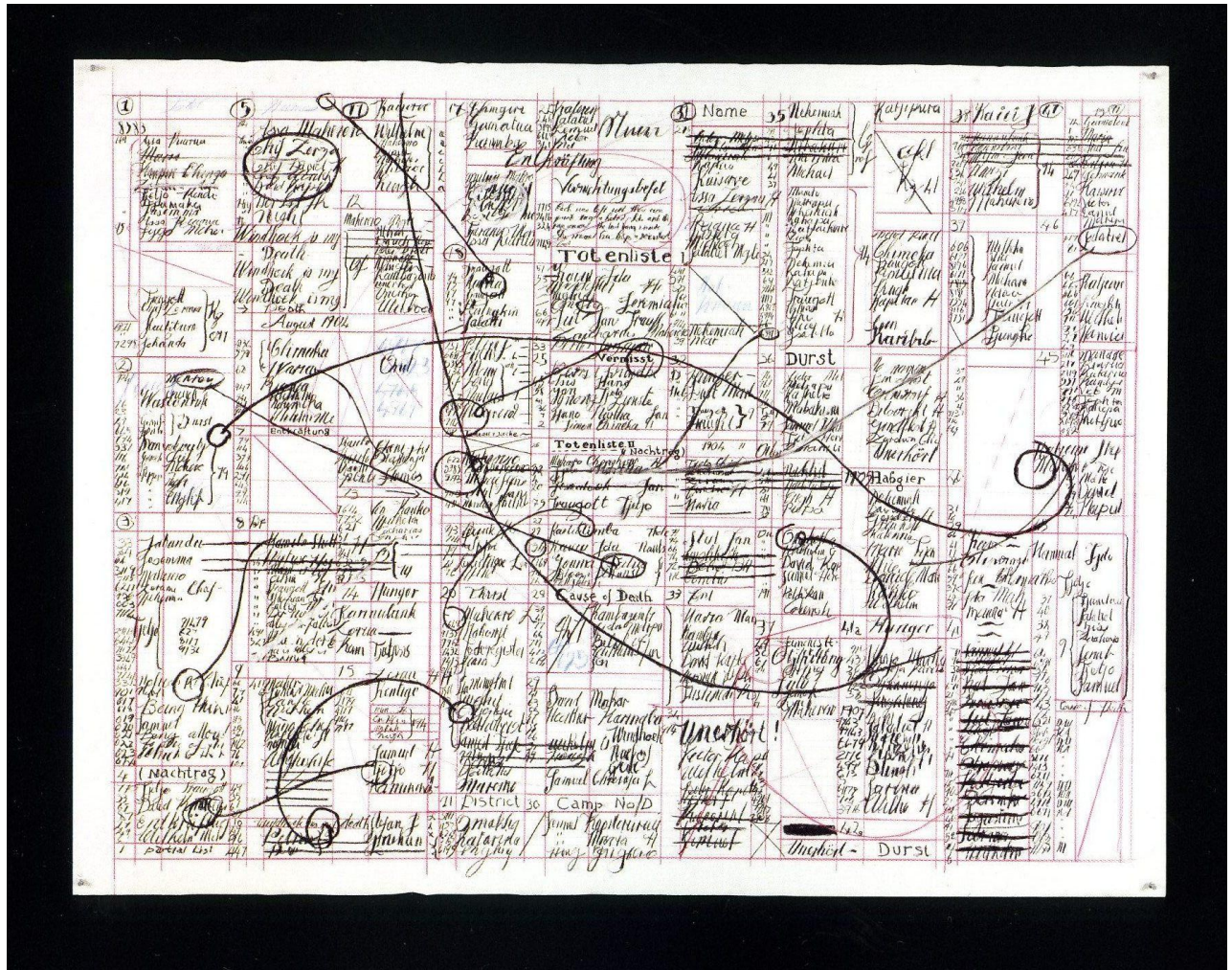


Figure 9.66 Drawing from *Black Box / Chambre Noir* (edited by Law-Viljoen 2007a:unpaginated).



Figure 9.67 *Rand Mines* (1999) Kentridge, etching, soft ground, aquatint and drypoint from 1 copper plate, on spreads from ledger of 1913, on *Vélin d'Arches Blanc* 300 gsm paper (Stewart 2006:76 — 77).



Figure 9.68 *Rand Mines* (1999) Kentridge, etching, soft ground, aquatint and drypoint from 1 copper plate, on spreads from ledger of 1913, on *Vélin d'Arches Blanc* 300 gsm paper (Stewart 2006:76 — 77).

9.3 Monuments

Architecture and monuments attempt to generate an “awareness of belonging” and even the “politics of fantasy” (Simmel cited in Werlen 1993:169; cf. Ignatieff 1993; Osborne 2001). Monuments are often contested sites in terms of actual land, and also in terms of social change and the human psyche. For some, they last too long:

[p]ublic monuments are the most conservative of commemorative forms precisely because they are meant to last, unchanged, forever. While other things come and go, are lost and forgotten, the monument is supposed to remain a fixed point, stabilizing both the physical and the cognitive landscape. Monuments attempt to mould a landscape of collective memory, to conserve what is worth remembering and discard the rest (Savage 1997:4).

Sanford Levinson, basing his comments on Frederic Nietzsche’s statement that monumentalism is “a protest against the change of generations and against transitoriness” has argued that “[a]ll monuments are an effort, in their own way, to stop time” (cited in Levinson 19980:7). This has led Vito Acconci to posit that time is fast and space is slow (1990).

Katherine Verdery has studied “political burials and reburials”, or made a study of the “post-mortem life” of memorialised individuals and studied how and why the skeletons of the dead become political symbols (1999:5). Verdery further suggests that “dead-body politics” needs the deliberation of several ideas: “political symbolism; death rituals and beliefs; national and international contexts; and the reworking of memory” (1999:5). For her,

[s]tatues are dead people cast in bronze or carved in stone. They symbolize a specific famous person while in a sense also *being* the body of the person. By arresting the process of that person's bodily decay, a statue alters the temporality associated with the person, bringing him into the realm of the timelessness of the sacred, like an icon (Verdery 1999:5).

This is particularly relevant to Kentridge's monument in his film of the same name — the "statue" is alive though.

There is also the idea of the "countermonument" — an anti-monument (cf. Coombes 2003; Young 2003b). Annie Coombes mentions the Vietnam Veteran's Memorial Wall in Washington D.C., created by Maya Ying Lin. Seen as an example of countermonument, initially the wall was not well received by the public. After an outcry sculptor Frederick Hart was commissioned to erect a less abstract and more figurative sculpture. However, Coombes points out that ironically it is Lin's Wall that is the more popular with survivors and their families. Individuals come to the Wall and trace the names on the walls onto pieces of paper (2003). Another example of a countermonument mentioned by Coombes is the 1986 Harburg Monument against Fascism. It is described as a twelve-metre high column of hollow aluminium covered in soft lead with a plaque at the bottom. The plaque reads:

[w]e invite the citizens of Harburg, and visitors to the town, to add their names to ours. In doing so, we commit ourselves to remain vigilant. As more and more names cover this 12 metre tall lead column, it will gradually be lowered into the ground. One day it will have disappeared completely, and the site of the Harburg monument against fascism will be empty. In the end it is only we ourselves who can rise up against injustice (cited in Coombes 2003:93).

By November 1993, the only remnant left of the column was a plaque and a glass vitrine on the ground. Through the glass, one can see the lead column sculpture, but one cannot read the inscriptions that were written on the sides of the column. Both these sculptures represent Pierre Nora's statement with regard to the concept of the "trace" as being the bearer of significance in modern life: "impermanent, mutating, and fragmentary, referring to but never entirely revealing the whole of which it is a part" (cited in Coombes 2003:93). Annie Coombes further suggests that the concept of the countermonument is manifestation of the character of memory in "that it risks obliteration and repression and, conversely, that it is only in the act of remembering that memory exists at all" (Coombes 2003:93).

With regard to representation, memorials, monuments and aesthetics the film *Monument* offers a special case — as the author of this thesis on Kentridge: it is an example of a countermonument. William Kentridge wanted the film to follow after *Mine* because it would have had specific relevance to the miner as labourer. When one learns that it is the so-called philanthropist, Soho Eckstein, who is erecting the monument, the initial thought is that it is in his favour — a bust commemorating all that he has done for the city of Johannesburg and the work he has provided for the miners. Then one realises that it is in fact a monument to the labourer. The assumption then is that it is going to be unveiled as a proud miner, standing tall in his uniform, pick over shoulder, with standard flashlight-cum-hardhat. Of course, miners as labourers have to endure excruciating, difficult conditions: the claustrophobia; the incredible heat and humidity; no air; the darkness; the constant

physical danger; and not least, the physical hard work. Then there are the peripheral problems: the alcoholism; the homosexuality; the prostitution; leaving their families behind, often in rural areas; and, the spread of AIDS. William Kentridge's *Monument* (and his film *Mine* and his play *Woyzeck on the Highveld*; see *Figures 9.69 — 9.71*) is a testament to all of those things — the pain of the *Everyman*, the Other.



Figure 9.69 Black and white photograph of scene from play *Woyzeck on the Highveld* (Christov-Bakargiev 1998:81).



Figure 9.70 Black and white photograph of scene from play *Woyzeck on the Highveld* (Christov-Bakargiev 1998:79).

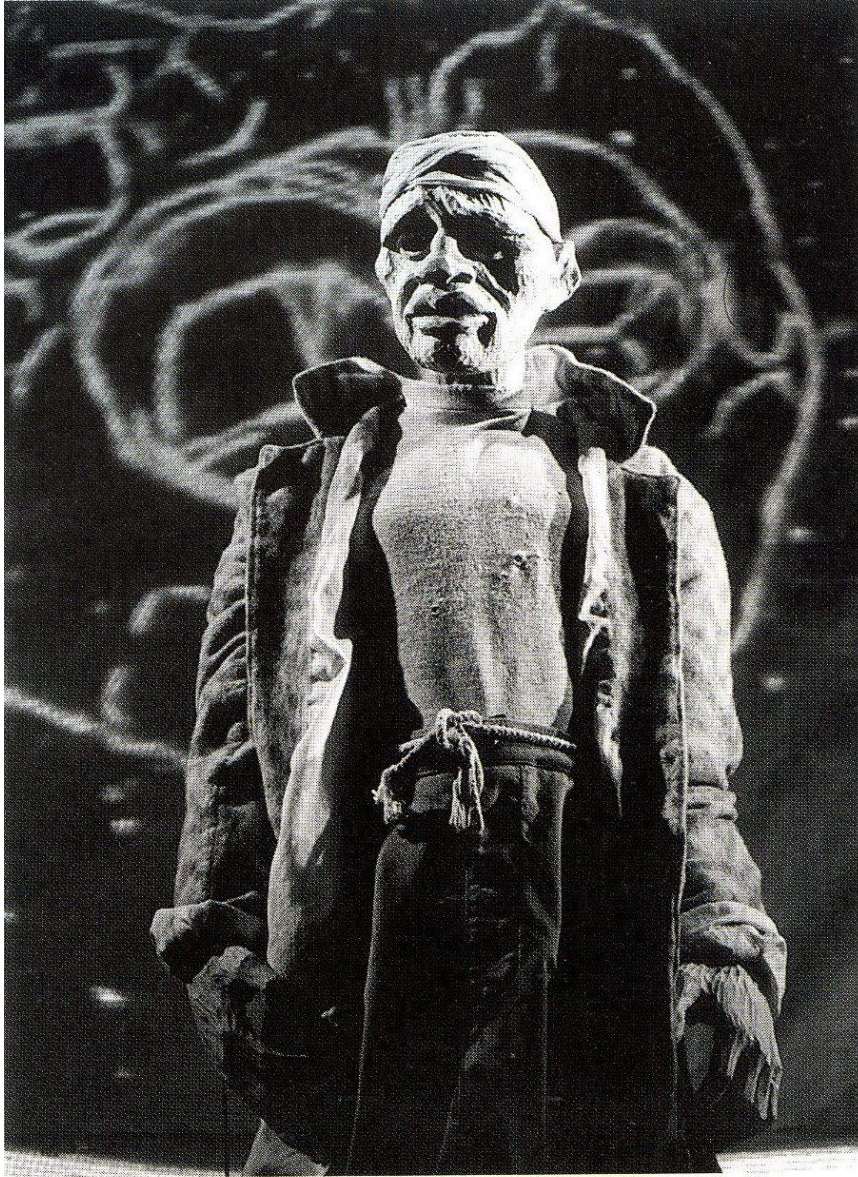


Figure 9.71 Black and white photograph of scene from play *Woyzeck on the Highveld* (Christov-Bakargiev 1998:81).

It is fascinating how Kentridge sets up the scene of the unveiling of the monument. There is the immaculate Soho Eckstein addressing the crowds, uttering

philosophising, soothing words, welcoming them. He is the great philanthropist who bestows this monument to the city in recognition of the labourer. In fact is this not a reward for those labourers that go to work every day, the have-nots, the dispossessed, the slaves. It makes the statement, "Look at the great work you are doing as labourers". Yet, of course, one can question the real expense. Who has really paid for this monument? This is intimated in the drawings / images with the cross-cut to the auditor's calculator on Soho Eckstein's office table / bed. The calculator spews out not literal numbers but numbers of people — the real cost of this monument. The film continues; with faceless individuals rapidly enter the stadium / auditorium, presumably dressed for the occasion, high in anticipation, the sculpture covered in an enormous sheet. The excitement grows as people increasingly fill the stadium (see *Figure 9.72*). All unveilings are by association big events — covered by the media, attended by the elite, the mayor, the politicians, dignitaries, the art critics, the artist of the sculpture; those with a personal interest; those whom it represents. It has first been commissioned, then advertised, the event of the year perhaps. Finally it is time and the sheet is removed. A sculpture of monumental size, an art work deemed spectacular enough to be worthy of such a representation. The audience digests the unveiling; there is silence, and then a sigh. Beautifully sculptured, a bit realistic perhaps, are the first responses, the face of the labourer lined / etched with years of pain and suffering. However, he is not standing proud, he is shown bent over in pain, the enormous rock almost crushing him, overburdened, overwhelmed. Then one notices that he is not there of his own volition — he is in fact tied to the monument's stand (see *Figure 9.73*). A silence

ensues when the audience realises that this is not what they had expected or envisaged. The audience is confronted not with a proud, hard-working labourer. Instead it is in fact Harry “the Hobo” who represents not only the labourer, but the dispossessed, the exploited, the slaves, the have-nots — in all his ragged “finery”. As the audience — in the film and of the film — simultaneously digests all of this, with eyes glued to this monstrosity / screen, something extraordinary happens. There is a close-up of Harry’s face. Harry blinks. He is alive. The enormity of this, the complete unexpectedness, the shock, the revulsion, changes everything in less than a second. That he is alive, actively suffering as one looks on, is horrifying and there is an overwhelming feeling of helplessness. One does not want to be faced with this unimaginable dreadfulness, this dilemma — what does one do, what can one do to stop this suffering? As a monument, it is perpetual, erected in the belief that it will be there forever. Rather than celebrating and acknowledging a labourer’s hard work, the audience is confronted with a situation that is real. Is Kentridge questioning one’s complicity in this pain and suffering, mesmerised and yet completely immobilised? Memorials of any kind are there to help one remember horrors that are too awful to contemplate, in a serene, highly organised, structured and controlled way. Is Kentridge suggesting that the audience are somehow responsible for Harry’s suffering, experienced in the ever-now? With monuments, individuals want something that symbolises the horror — but simultaneously do not want to be confronted with the horror itself. This is a monument reversed / inverted — a countermonument (cf. Coombes 2003; Young 2003b). It is unusual, extraordinary, unique and appalling all at once.



Figure 9.72 Drawing from *Monument* (Christov-Bakargiev 1998:56).



Figure 9.73 Drawing from *Monument* (Christov-Bakargiev 1998:53).

Does one confront this living countermonument, or stop it —is one responsible, complicit, does one look away? Is it all in the name of memory / remembrance? One does not have to remember the hardship experienced by the labourer because one is experiencing / seeing it firsthand. This recalls events in Germany and Poland during the liberation of the concentration and death camps in 1945.

Many of these camps were very close to German / Polish towns, but when townspeople were questioned afterwards about their knowledge of these camps everyone pleaded ignorance. Enraged and disbelieving of this response — the soldiers of the American liberation army's insisted that every individual walk down to the camps to see the atrocities committed in the name of Hitler. Documentaries show these individuals, lined up, person by person, looking at the multitudes of naked skeletal corpses of men, women and children. They had to, in single file, walk through the camps and see the conditions of the camps, inhale the smell of decomposing bodies, and the smoke lingering from the chimneys where millions of people were cremated (they held tissues and handkerchiefs to their noses). One wonders at the sense of remorse and guilt or responsibility that these onlookers experienced when confronted by the result of their denial and inactivity? It appears as if Kentridge is attempting to achieve the same effect with Harry being pinioned alive. He is making one confront not only the horror of apartheid, but also one's denial of apartheid and capitalist exploitation. He is forcing the viewers to confront their condoning, justifications and contributions to apartheid and capitalist atrocities. Keeping in mind that this film was made during the apartheid era, Kentridge is presenting a challenge — see, remember, question, and act.

9.4 Conclusion

In concluding this chapter, the reader is referred to Kentridge's film *Shadow Procession* (see *Figure 9.74*). It presents the viewer with another fascinating example of Kentridge's use of the cityscape and how the city and an individual(s)

are entwined. It begins with a fluid procession of cut-out / out-lined individuals faceless and displaced. Melancholy music by Alfred Makgalemele accompanies the procession. Their destination is not known — and this gives the procession a desolate, poignant feel. These are the dislocated, the remnants of individuals fleeing from forced removals. Bitterly sad and even macabre — for example there is a miner who is hanging from a noose (suicide at being forced to relocate, or murdered?) Others are overburdened with their only belongings, similar to Harry the Hobo's heavy load in the film *Monument*. In the procession one individual is burdened with an entire neighbourhood, while another carries a city on his back. The associations are obvious; they are the victims of apartheid's "apartheid" — demarcated land for townships, Bantustans. Neighbourhoods such as the already mentioned Sophiatown and District Six are simply re-claimed at will by the rulers of the regime. Pierre Nora, the French social historian, claims that "*lieux de mémoire*" or "sites of memory" such as monuments, museums, festivals and archives amongst many "are fundamentally remains, the ultimate embodiments of memorial consciousness that has barely survived in a historical age that calls out for memory because it has abandoned it" (1989:12; cf. Kugelmass 1996:199). Similarly, Saul Friedländer, a psycho-historian, claims that there have been two divergent streams of thought in contemporary Western societies: the first is for a profusion of "deliberate evocations of the past" with the creation of museums, monuments and media productions. By contrast, the second stream of thought acknowledges the increasing "irrelevance of historical consciousness" in a new era that is predominantly "post-historical" (Friedländer 1993:58-59; cf. Kugelmass 1996:199).

The commonality of these divergent points of view is contained in the cultural sphere of the commercial sector: the past is both “pervasive and apparently irrelevant” (Friedländer 1993:58-59; cf. Kugelmass 1996:199). For Kentridge the past is the ever-now, the perpetually present — he attempts to evoke the past through his works. He attempts to capture remnants of the past history/ies of South Africa, Namibia, Ethiopia and Soviet Russia. He focuses on memory and how it is layered into landscapes, cities and monuments. He attempts to capture / freeze the very idea of memory/ies, yet his works simultaneously acknowledge the ephemerality and transience of the very concept of memory. His drawings are sedimental; so too are the landscapes and the cities that he draws. In *Sobriety, Obesity & Growing Old*, for example, Soho Eckstein’s businesses and buildings collapse. They are erased, imploded and then re-erected — residues of charcoal and assumed sediments of glass, concrete and steel are left behind. Kentridge has not just *portrayed* the land in his films, stills and other productions, including his charcoal and pastel drawings aptly titled *Colonial Landscapes* (1995 — 1996; see *Figure 9.75* and *Figure 9.76*); and others: *Anti-Waste* (1990); *Spartan / Isando* (1988); *Urbanise* (1988); *Landscape with Pipe* (1988). He has also marked the land physically. In a collaborative art work with Danish artist Doris Bloom, they marked the landscape with a giant anatomical heart in white charcoal (an inversion of Kentridge’s usual style of black / grey charcoal on white paper). In another work they drew a gate with a metaphorical heart shape in the middle and set it alight. The title of the series stands for itself: *Memory and Geography* (see *Figure 9.4* and *Figure 9.77*). The second drawing was literally burnt into the landscape forever,

but not necessarily observable forever. Both are monumental designs. Both become actual, excavatable sediments. Both were drawn, and then erased. Only traces are left. And, once again his theme of the body and the land as one is apparent. In a video made of these art works there is footage of William Kentridge looking down from the helicopter which was flying over the art works. It is almost identical to the image he drew of Felix Teitlebaum looking down at the city of Johannesburg in his film *Johannesburg, 2nd Greatest City after Paris*.



Figure 9.74 Colour photograph of William Kentridge's Johannesburg studio with bronze sculptures from the *Procession* series (2000) (Benezra, Boris, Cooke, Sitas and Cameron 2001:58).

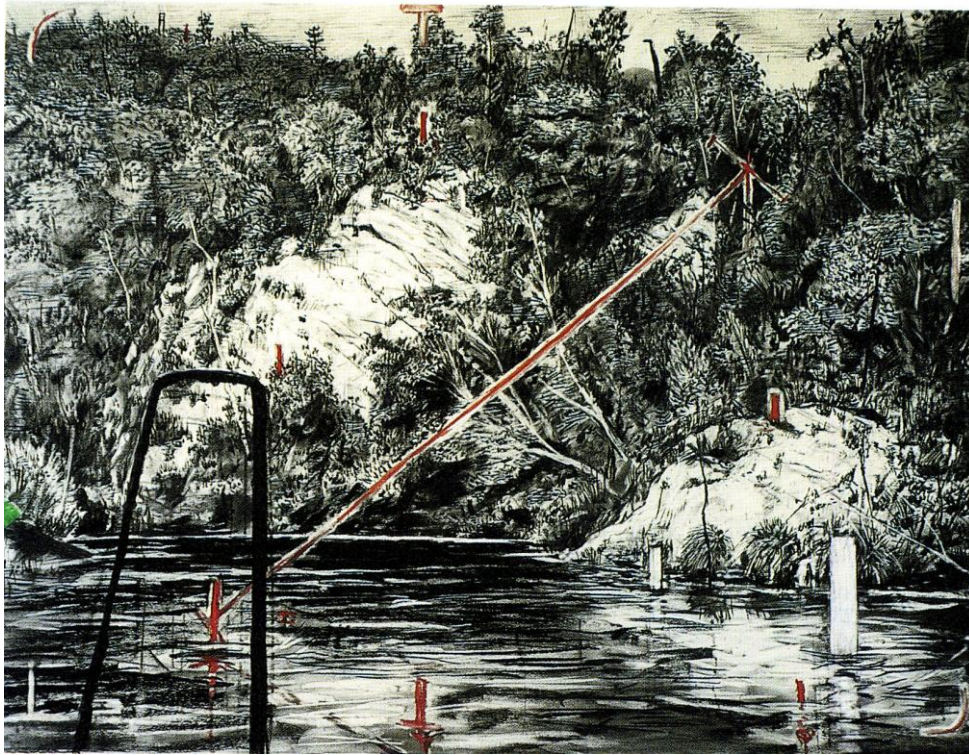


Figure 9.75

Drawing from *Colonial Landscapes* (1995—1996) William Kentridge, charcoal and pastel on paper (Christov-Bakargiev 1998:177).

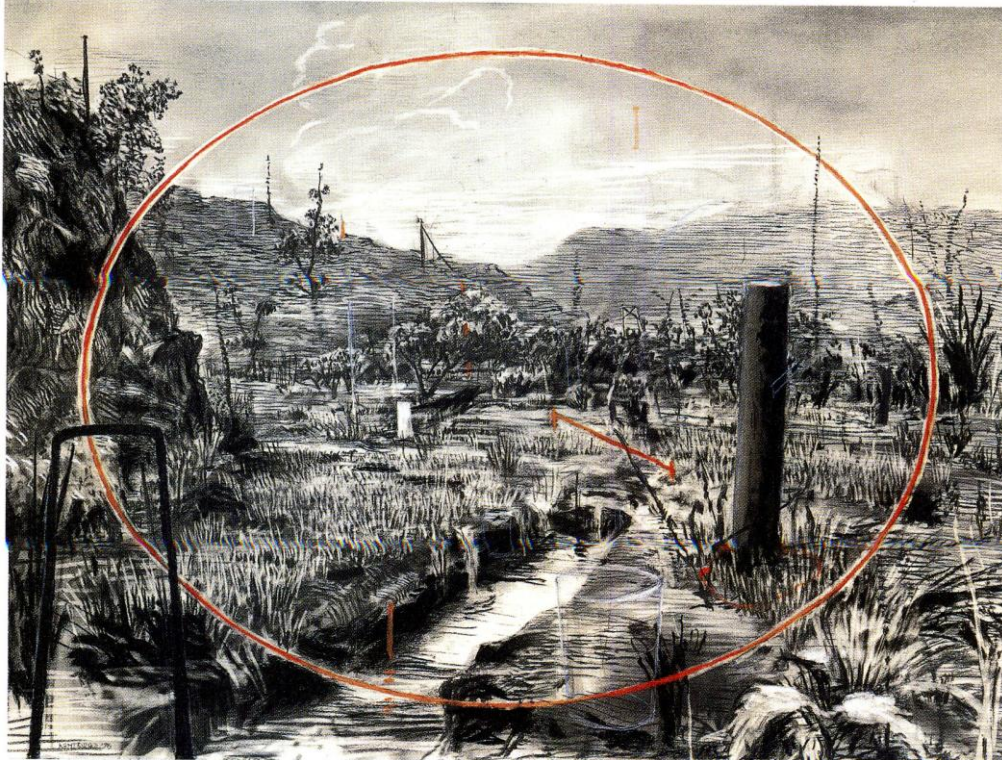


Figure 9.76 Drawing from *Colonial Landscapes* (1995—1996) William Kentridge, charcoal and pastel on paper (Christov-Bakargiev 1998:179).

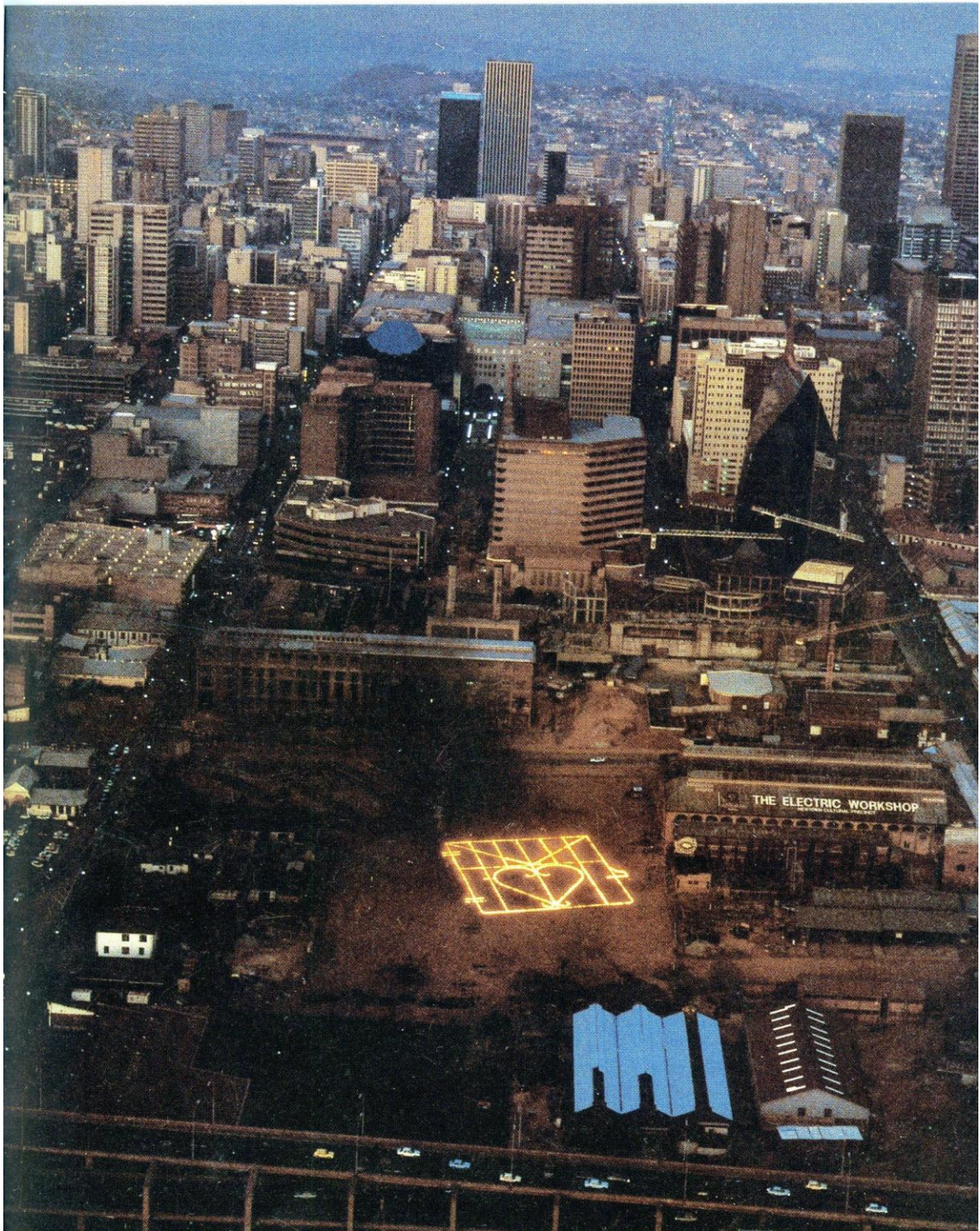


Figure 9.77 Colour aerial photograph of *Memory and Geography* (1995) William Kentridge (and Doris Bloom), multi-media project, Rome (Christov-Bakargiev 1998:21).

CHAPTER TEN: CONCLUSION

Theoretical and analytical sampling, as well as comparative analysis, have provided the means for this researcher to interpret Kentridge's films in an inimitable way, affording new insight into the artist's works. This thesis has explained how Kentridge has depicted various themes such as memory, identity, trauma, and guilt, within a specifically situated South African context. In addition, this study has highlighted the importance of Kentridge's works in the way that he has represented historical and cultural phenomena, such as that of the brutal apartheid regime and its aftermath. Through this research, the way in which Kentridge has provided astonishing and creative insight into and understanding of culturally and historically specific contexts has been brought to the fore. This study has also contributed to the understanding and meaning of Kentridge's emergent themes and idiographic depictions of trauma, guilt, history, memory and identity in his *Drawings for Projection* animated film series. Thus, through connecting memory and trauma this thesis has also articulated *how* and *why* Kentridge portrays apartheid's atrocities and its reverberations, surrealistically and ingeniously. The films themselves are acknowledged as an important source of reference of South African society. They are a documentation of the trauma and horror experienced during the height of apartheid.

10.1 Contributions and limitations of the study

As *Chapter Two: Literature Review: William Kentridge (Part I)* and *Chapter Three: Literature Review: Theoretical (Part II)* emphasise, there has clearly been a research gap of heretofore unexamined theoretical and analytical

analysis into the *how* and *why* of Kentridge's portrayal of memory. This doctoral study has addressed this gap, and in doing so has contributed to the field in three distinct and significant ways: firstly, to the growing scholarship on William Kentridge's artistic work; to a specifically South African perspective of the growing field of trauma studies; and lastly, to the apartheid and post-apartheid reflections on re-remembering and forgetting; memorialisation; forgiveness; and guilt.

However, the study has not been without its challenges and limitations. Most pointedly, the research design methodology as applied in this dissertation is mostly one of over-generalisation. The other limitation is that the sampling method was purposive. William Kentridge is a prolific artist working in artistic mediums of sculpture (bronze, paper, iron), plays, operas, still lifes, etchings, prints, and tapestries, to mention a few. However it is the animated film series *Drawings for Projection* that was selected as the primary sample to be studied because: firstly, it is highly representative of his *oeuvre*; and secondly, because it directly correlates with events taking place in South Africa at the time of their creation, which provide reflective and reflexive elements to them. For example, *History of the Main Complaint* was made during the year the TRC was instituted, while *Johannesburg, 2nd Greatest City after Paris* and *Mine and Monument* were made during the height of apartheid, and during a State of Emergency. These films included both direct and indirect references to the political and socio-cultural events of their time. However, references have been made to Kentridge's other works, such as *7 Fragments for George Méliès*; *Black Box / Chambre Noir*; *Ubu Tells the Truth*; and *Ubu and the Truth*

Commission. Still, the series is clearly demarcated and only allows for brief comparisons and references to his other artistic works. This is predominantly because of time constraints, but also because the nine films that make up the *Drawings for Projection* series are a self-contained unit, specifically beginning in 1989 (*Johannesburg, 2nd Greatest City after Paris*) when the first film was made, and ending in 2003 when the last film was made (*Tide Table*).

10.2 In summation

William Kentridge's charcoal, hand-drawn, animated film series *Drawings for Projection* was positioned at the beginning of this study as a dialectic of self and memory as embodied in a post-colonial South African setting. The series spanned a period of time that documented the apartheid to post-apartheid to post post-apartheid eras. The central theme of Kentridge's complex, unique *Drawings for Projection* series is that of memory: the representation of his own memories and those of others. Using qualitative methodology, the study has substantiated this hypothesis by referencing certain seminal works. For instance there is Marianne Hirsch's concept of "postmemory" (1997) and Sigmund Freud's theories of "screen memories" (1899b). At the outset the thesis sought to understand the very concept of memory, relying on the psychoanalytic explanation of memory and the unconscious mind as explicated by Sigmund Freud. The study progressed with the linking of memory to the many themes found within Kentridge's series, such as: representation (of, for example apartheid violence and traumatic memory); time; space; history; identity; cities, land / landscapes / geography; violence; and memorials and memorialisation. Further supporting the study's hypothesis were comparative

analyses of Kentridge's works with those of other artists such as Pascal Croci, art spiegelman (*sic*) and Anselm Kiefer. These artists have also depicted memory — their own and others' — of, for example, atrocities committed during the Holocaust. Throughout the study, and as peripheral support for this hypothesis, many references have also been made to Kentridge's erstwhile works. However, whilst concluding that William Kentridge's series does indeed depict his own personal and artistic memorial to his relationship with South Africa, it in no way argues for a definitive critique of his work. In keeping with Kentridge's own theme of intertextuality, and in keeping with the researcher's own world view, this thesis proffers only one interpretation, one methodological investigation among many.

10.3 New / other Kentridge projects

William Kentridge has continued to work prolifically since the final film (*Tide Table* 2003) in the *Drawings for Projection* series. It would appear that this series, with its specifically South African setting, is now at an end, as Kentridge explores events and stories beyond South Africa's borders; such as that of the Herero peoples in *Black Box / Chambre Noir* and *The Magic Flute*. However, he continues to focus on his key themes of memory, history, time, landscape, guilt and responsibility.

From 2001 to 2007, Kentridge created the designs for a series of seventeen tapestries. These designs were created by fastening black paper cut-outs onto pages from books, usually colonial-era European atlases (Guercio 2008), a process that depicts the impact of history on the landscape. There is also an

ongoing production of static images such as prints (Krut 2006) in addition to his animations and theatrical pieces.

In 2003 Kentridge presented a new series of seven very short films entitled *7 Fragments for Georges Méliès*, dedicated to the late nineteenth century pioneer of cinematic special effects. Using a mix of animated drawings and live-action film, they depict Kentridge himself interacting with the typical objects to be found in his studio. These interactions are of the same surreal nature as the events in Méliès' groundbreaking films. Kentridge depicts himself not only as a live-action figure, but also as an animated figure (sometimes being drawn by the live-action figure), thereby exploring his identity as an artist in relation to his own work, particularly as regards the private creative landscape of his studio. Another short film from 2003, *Day for Night*, was filmed in an experimental manner by tracking the movements of ants congregating around sugar water, and then printing the negative of the resulting film. The result is a constantly changing set of patterns composed of white dots (Alemani 2006). In all these films one sees the private introspective side of Kentridge's work — the landscapes of the mind that in *Drawings for Projection* are intertwined with his more public self.

The year 2005 saw the premiere of Kentridge's production of the Mozart opera, *The Magic Flute*. Once again, projections of Kentridge's animated drawings served as a backdrop for the production. He also designed stage machinery to move performers and props across the stage (Law-Viljoen 2007b and 2007c). The production itself, with its imagery of light triumphing over darkness, is both

a presentation and a critique of the Enlightenment ideas of Mozart's era (Law-Viljoen 2007b and 2007c).

In the process of planning this opera, Kentridge produced a number of model theatres depicting different stages of the performance. These models in turn led to the creation of the multi-media installation, *Black Box / Chambre Noir* (2005) (Law-Viljoen 2007a). This work features a mechanised puppet theatre production in a room with drawings on found paper hung on the walls. The theatre production also incorporates live-action film and Kentridge's animated drawings. Its subject matter is the German colonial massacre of the Herero people of Namibia from 1904-1907, during which approximately sixty percent of all Herero were killed (Hoffman 2007). Regarded as the first-ever genocide (Taylor 2008) it is, as Kentridge himself puts it, "now mostly forgotten, overshadowed by other German massacres and genocides later in the century" (Kentridge 2005:51). Not only is this a reference to the Holocaust, but it makes it clear that memory and its associated themes are central to *Black Box / Chambre Noir*. As Kentridge sees it, tragedies such as the Herero genocide are the final bitter fruit of the failed ideals of the Enlightenment. In other words, they are the working out of the historical processes set in motion by colonialism (Law-Viljoen 2007a).

Another Western atrocity in a part of Africa outside South Africa is the subject matter of the anamorphic film *WHAT WILL COME (HAS ALREADY COME)* (2007). This film is concerned with the Italian bombing of Ethiopia with mustard gas in the mid 1930s, an atrocity that resulted in 30 000 deaths. It experiments with the effects of reflection and distortion through the revolving projection of the

film onto a table, with a cylindrical mirror in its centre that then captures the image. The repetitive effects created by this process (as well the title of the film) are a commentary on the repetitive nature of history (for example, the events depicted in this film could suggest contemporary events in Iraq) (Taylor 2008). In addition, the distorted perspectives of the film comment on the way in which one's personal perspectives invariably distort one's understanding of history.

At the time of writing (2011) William Kentridge has just completed working on the Shostakovich opera *The Nose*, whose subject matter is the rise of Stalinism in the Soviet Union (Korenblat 2007). Once again themes of totalitarianism and genocide come to the fore. Other projects have been engendered by this work in progress, just as *The Magic Flute* gave rise to *Black Box / Chambre Noir*. *I am Not Me, the Horse is Not Mine* (2008) is the title of two productions. Firstly, it is the title of a multi-media lecture by Kentridge, accompanied by projections of drawings and animations from his work on *The Nose* (Korenblat 2007; McIlleron 2009). Secondly, it is an installation displaying eight animated films. In addition, Kentridge has worked with the composer Francois Sarhan on a performance entitled *Telegrams from the Nose* (McIlleron 2009).

10.4 Possible future projects for research

There are many possible future projects with regard to Kentridge's *oeuvre*, not only because he is so prolific, but because his intensely personal and public creations are layered with latent meanings, waiting to be explicated. One such

element that this study lacked, for example, was a series of interviews with the artist. Another project might involve an analysis using a post-colonial theoretical framework with the works of Edward Said, Franz Fanon and Homi K. Bhabha.

10.5 Conclusion

Of all the multifarious creations in William Kentridge's body of work, with their complex intertwining strands of meaning, their mixture of playful humour and deep tragedy, their contrasting of the public / political with the intensely personal, it is the *Drawings for Projection* series that stands out as the centrepiece. Spanning most of the artist's career, it reflects his ever-changing inner world as that world responds to the outward circumstances of political change in South Africa. The last film, *Tide Table*, depicts Kentridge's presumed alter-ego, Soho / Felix, sitting immobile and asleep in a deckchair as the sea changes the world around him, sometimes taking life in the process (Alemani 2006). Does this reflect the artist's own concern with his inability to change, his fear of his own aging and eventual death, or a fear of the stultification of his art — a lack of inspiration for future projects? Or is Kentridge simply saying that this is the end of the series, and with it, the end of his intense focus on South Africa? Soho / Felix is perhaps not so much the artist's alter-ego as it is that aspect of himself troubled by the history of South Africa and by his own memories of growing up under apartheid. Kentridge is perhaps saying that he has taken these concerns, and with them the character of Soho / Felix, as far as they can go. Apartheid and its immediate aftermath have receded and there is

no longer the same moral imperative to explore this subject matter repeatedly. South Africa has supplied Kentridge with his essential theme of memory and all that goes with it, and he is now free to examine this cluster of concepts as they manifest in other parts of Africa and the world. It is not just that history repeats itself, but it repeats itself in diverse places. What one has learnt from South Africa can be applied to other countries. In the end, Soho / Felix perhaps reflects *Drawings for Projection* itself, now “fixed” in its final form as the whirling flux of history moves onwards. This study ends with an insightful statement made by the award committee when Kentridge was presented with the Kyoto Prize in 2010, the first African to ever win this prestigious award. The committee stated that Kentridge has created “a new contemporary vehicle of artistic expression within which various media fuse together in multiple ways” and praised him for his “deep insight and profound reflection on the nature of human existence” (cited in BLOUINARTINFO 2010).

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